

**Critical Incident Policy
Swords Community College
2025/2026**

**Date for Review:
December 2026**

Signed: _____
Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: _____
Principal (Secretary to Board)

Date: _____

Date: _____

Critical Incident Plan

This policy is informed by the vision for Swords Community College coupled with the school's ethos which aims to enable students to reach their full potential both academically and socially while upholding our beliefs and foundations of our four pillars – Respect, Teamwork, Excellence and Resilience. This policy will reflect the pastoral and inclusive nature of our school. Our priority in Swords Community College Community is to ensure a safe, positive, supportive, and optimal educational environment for all.

Introduction

Swords Community College delivers a six-year cycle from first to sixth year. Swords Community College aims to protect the well-being of its students by providing a safe, supportive, and nurturing environment always. Every effort has been made to create a coping, supportive and caring ethos in SCC and to ensure the physical and psychological safety of all members of the school community.

The staff and management of Swords Community College acknowledge the importance of preventing, where possible, and managing critical incidents. A Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) has been established, as one element of the school's policies and plans, to drive the development and implementation of the Critical Incident Management Plan. (CIMP)

Review and Research

The CIMT have consulted resource documents available to schools on www.education.ie, www.nosp.ie and NEPS 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)
- Wellbeing in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DE, DOH, HSE 2013)
- National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS) 'Responding to Critical Incidents in Schools' e-learning course. Details Included in Appendix 1
- Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (DE 2018, revised 2019) Appendix 2

Aims of the Plan

Every school faces the real prospect of having to respond, at short or no notice, to crises of various types. While critical incidents of their very nature tend to occur without warning and at any time day or night, this set of guidelines provides advice for those whose task it is to manage such incidents. However, we are being more advisory than prescriptive - since each crisis situation will demand a different set of responses.

If the crisis is one that affects the whole school community, then the Critical Incident Plan is put into action. This ensures that best practice is followed in offering emotional, spiritual, and psychological support to all those affected by the tragedy at a critical time in the life of the school.

Definition of a Critical Incident

The staff and management of Swords Community College recognise a critical incident to be “an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school” (NEPS 2016). Critical incidents may involve one or more students or staff members, or members of our local community.

Examples of critical incidents may include (but are not limited to):

- 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.
- Serious physical attack on a member of the school community.
- An accident involving member(s) of the school community.
- A major accident, tragedy, natural disaster in the wider community.
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, technology etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.
- A major accident locally or abroad.

Aims of the Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP)

The aim of the CIMP is to help SCC school management and staff.

- to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident.
- to enable us to maintain a sense of control.
- to ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff.
- to help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited.
- to enable us to affect a return to normality as soon as possible.

Creation of a Coping Supportive and Caring Ethos in the College

Swords Community College has put systems in place to build resilience in both staff and students, in this way, 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 and the promotion of wellbeing. (see Appendix 2)

In addition, the Department of Education provides an Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme, Spectrum Life, which is available to all school personnel, their partners, and children over the age of 18 living at the family home (see Appendix 3)

Physical Safety:

Plans and procedures are in place to ensure that our college is as safe as possible.

- An evacuation plan is formulated.
- Regular fire drills occur.
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked.
- School door is locked during school hours and sign-in/out system in place at the main office.
- Pre-opening supervision between 8:10am and 8:21am, break, lunch and immediately after normal school hours.
- Both internal and external CCTV cameras monitor corridors, doors, and outdoor spaces.

- All side entrances to the school grounds are closed during the school day and are only opened at the beginning and end of the school day and breaktimes.

Psychological Safety:

The management and staff of Swords Community College 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 (see Appendix 1).

- 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; decision making and prevention of alcohol and drug misuse. Promotion of mental health is a 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.
- Resources on difficulties affecting the post primary school student are available,
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- Resources on difficulties affecting the post primary school student are available.
- The Career Guidance teacher is trained in interventions for suicidal students.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies, including Pieta House, Jigsaw, CAMHS, HSE, DDLETB PSS, NEPS and Tusla.
- Inputs to students are carefully considered in the light of criteria about student safety, the appropriateness of the content, and the expertise of the provider.
- The school has a clear policy on anti-bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.
- There is a pastoral care team in place in the school.
- 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/Deputy, parents are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.
- A referral system has been established and students have access to the Guidance Counsellors through a referral via the Year Head and Care Team.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves. (see Appendix 3)

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

The team will comprise the Principal, Deputy Principal and other teachers concerned (i.e., Year Head/Tutor of the effected group). The names of the CIMT are outlined below. The members of the team will meet annually to review and update the policy and plan.

The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) will be contacted via text should a critical incident occur and will contact other external personnel as needed. See phone numbers listed below.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provides materials for students (from critical incident folder) ○ Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff ○ Looks after setting up supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed. <p>Community Liaison</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of all parents. ○ Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources ○ Liaises with the PSS for support and onward referral. ○ Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support. ○ Coordinates the involvement of these agencies. ○ Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies. 	<p>Guidance Counsellor</p> <p>Guidance Counsellor</p> <p>Guidance Counsellor</p> <p>Nominated Team Member</p> <p>Guidance Counsellor</p> <p>Principal</p> <p>Principal</p> <p>Guidance Counsellor</p>
<p>Parent Liaison</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Visits the bereaved family with the team leader. ○ Arranges parent meetings, if held ○ May facilitate such meetings and manage 'questions and answers'. ○ Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on school system ready to adapt. ○ Set up room for meetings with parents. ○ Maintains a record of parents seen. ○ Meets with individual parents. <p>Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)</p>	<p>Principal/year Head/Tutor</p> <p>Principal/Deputy Principal/Year Head/Tutor</p> <p>Office/Admin</p> <p>Guidance Suite</p> <p>Record of meeting forms</p> <p>Year Head – source from resource book</p>
<p>Media Liaison</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In advance of an incident will consider issues that may arise and strongly advise how they 	<p>Principal/Deputy Principal ONLY</p> <p>DDLETB</p>

<p>might be responded to (e.g. students being interviewed etc.)</p> <p>Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews</p>	
<p>Administrator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Maintenance of up-to-date telephone numbers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Parents/guardians ○ Teachers ○ Emergency services ○ Students ○ Emergency information for trips ○ Takes telephone calls and notes. ○ Ensures that templates are on the school’s system in advance and ready for adaptation ○ Prepares and sends out letters, emails and faxes as directed by school management. ○ Photocopies materials needed. ○ Maintains records. <p>Plan of what rooms will be used</p>	<p>Office Staff</p>

Record keeping

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters emails and texts sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc. and so on. The school Secretaries will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

Guidance Counsellors will keep records of student meetings.

Confidentiality and good name considerations

The management and staff of Swords Community College have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of the people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements. The members of the school staff will bear this in mind and will seek to ensure that students do so also. For example, the term ‘suicide’ will not be used without the consent of the family involved or until it has been established categorically that a person’s death was as the result of suicide. The terms ‘tragic death’ or ‘sudden death’ shall 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.

Office Procedure – An agreed statement is to be issued when responding to phone enquiries. Further enquiries are to be directed to the principal or other members of the critical incident team. Numbers should be available for pupils, parents, guardians, staff, and all emergency support service. It is important to maintain a log of events, letter(s) to parents, telephone calls made and received.

Room Allocation – Students should follow the normal class timetable in so far as possible. Where needed the critical incident team may assign a room to outside agencies e.g., counselling service/school psychologist. A room will be available for students who wish to have a quiet area for reflection. A supervised area or support room can be available to facilitate meeting with concerned parents

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	Meeting room for staff
Library	Meeting with students
Principal's Office/meeting room	Meeting with parents
Meeting room	Meeting with media
Guidance Office	Individual sessions with students
Pastoral Office 3	Meeting with other visitors

Consultation and Communication Regarding the Plan:

Implementation

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 CIMT has a personal copy of the plan.

New and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan.

Role	Name	Phone
Team Leader	Principal Aoife Smith	01-2233067
Garda Liaison	Principal Aoife Smith	01-2233067
Deputy Leader	Deputy Principal Ciará Punch	01-2233067
Deputy Leader	Deputy Principal Anne Kinsella	01-2233067
Deputy Leader	Deputy Principal Ronan McBrearty	01-2233067
Staff Liaison	Deputy Principal Anne Kinsella	01-2233067
Student Liaison	Guidance Counsellors Etain O'Moore Cara Doyle	01-2233067
Parent Liaison	Principal Aoife Smith	
Community Liaison	Principal Aoife Smith	01-2233067
Media Liaison	DDLETB	01-4529600

Administrator	School Secretaries	Caitriona Prendeville Anne Marie Maxwell Ashling Flanagan	01-2233067
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Roles and Responsibilities

- **All staff** – familiarising themselves with the policy and following its procedures.
- **CIMT** – maintaining the Critical Incident policy and implementation of the policy.
- **Principal** – leading the CIMT and overseeing the implementation of the policy.

Monitoring

Implementation of the policy will be monitored by the principal, and the CIMT.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and considering events that may impact on its working.

Ratification and communication

This policy will be communicated directly to staff during staff meeting and will be made available electronically also. A hard copy will be accessible alongside other school policies.

Emergency Contact List

Agency	Contact Numbers
Swords Garda Station	01 6664700
Child and Family Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Swords	01-8907152
DDLETB Psychological Service	01-4598446
Emergency Services	999
Employee Assistance Services	1800 411 057
Fire Station Swords	01-6734000
Hospital James Connolly Memorial	01 6465000
HSE	1890 252 919
Jigsaw	01 9603020
Pieta House Lucan	1800 247 247
PSS	Mobile Number available to SMT
Local Health Centre	01 9212100
National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS)	01 8892700
Parish Priest	01 8401661
Primary Care Centre Swords	01 9213200
Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention Dublin North: Sara Maxwell	076 6958993 0860214241
State Examinations Commission	090 6442700
Unions:	
• INTO	01 8047700
• ASTI	016040160
• TUI	014922588

Procedures to be followed in the event of a critical incident occurring.**Critical Incident Management Template****Day 1: Short Term Actions (Leadership, CIMT) – Maintain the normal routine if possible.**

Task	Name	Completed
Gather accurate information	Principal	
Who, what, when, where how? Names of students/staff involved. Other schools involved? Extent of injuries/Location of injuries	Principal/ Deputy Principal	
Locate CIMT and convene CIMT meeting (see Appendix 5 for sample agenda) – specify time and place clearly.	Principal	
Is the incident requiring a NEPS response at level 1,2 or 3?		
Contact the affected family/families	Principal / Deputy Principal	
Contact external agencies	Principal	
Arrange supervision for students	Principal / Deputy Principal	
Hold staff meeting (See Appendix 4 for sample agenda)	Principal	
Agree schedule for the day	Principal	
Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately).	Principal, Deputy Principal & Year Head	
Compile a list of vulnerable students	Year Head/Tutor/Guidance counsellor/SEN team	
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly.	Principal	
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	Principal, DDLETB	
Inform parents	Principal	
Hold end of day staff briefing	Principal	

Day 2 and following days: Medium Term Actions

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Principal/ CIMT
Meet external agencies	CIMT
Arrange support for students, staff, parents.	CIMT
Meet whole staff	Principal
Visit the injured	Principal / Deputy/Guidance/Year Head
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Principal
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service.	CIMT
Make decisions about school closure	BOM

Follow up: beyond 72 hours.

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Year Heads /Tutor/Teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	CIMT
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	CIMT, Year Heads
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BoM / Staff, Parents, Students
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff / BoM

Contacting Staff if tragedy occurs over a Weekend/Holidays

Task	Resource
If it is the death of a colleague the system of informing staff is via the texting service- general text directing staff to email	Principal's texting facility
If it is the death of a student, The Critical Incident Management Team needs to be informed immediately. Other staff can be informed later.	Principal
Whoever first hears the news to contact the Principal	All staff
Contact Board of Management and Parents Council	Principal

After Incident – The Principal with the assistance of the critical incident team will prepare a report for the BOM and DDLETB. Counselling of those affected will continue as needed. The school will offer any appropriate requested assistance to the family.

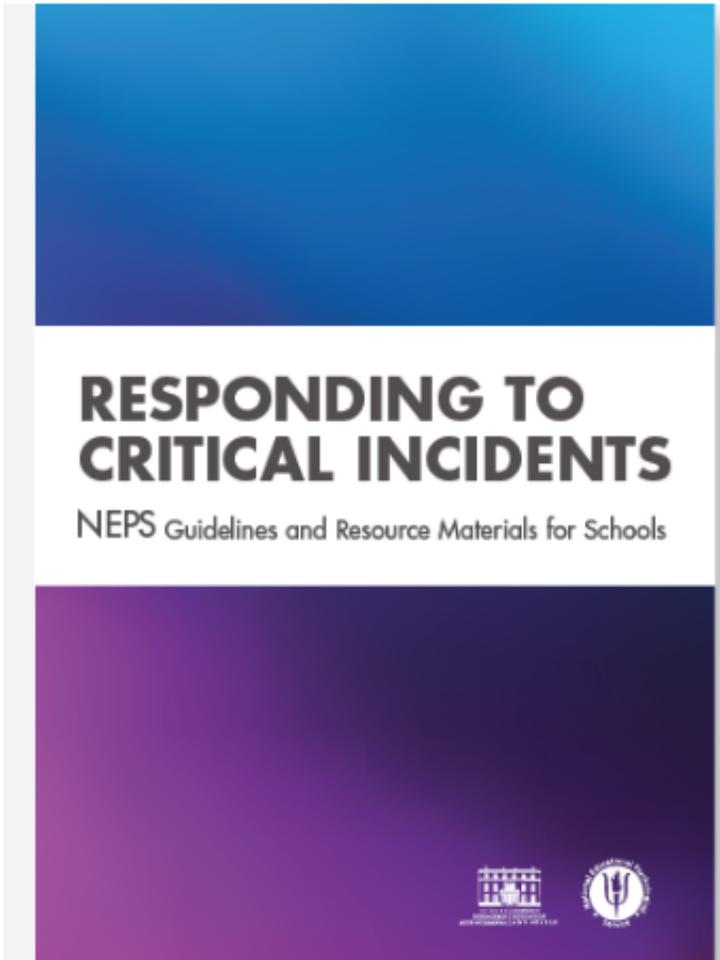
Long Term – The critical incident team should meet as soon as possible to review the procedures followed, consult with the school community, and amend as deemed necessary.

Key Documents for Parents – Swords CC would like to bring to the attention of our parents/guardians the following documents available from the Department of Education. R6,7,8, 9 and 12.

<https://www.gov.ie/en/service/5ef45c-neps/#critical-incidents>

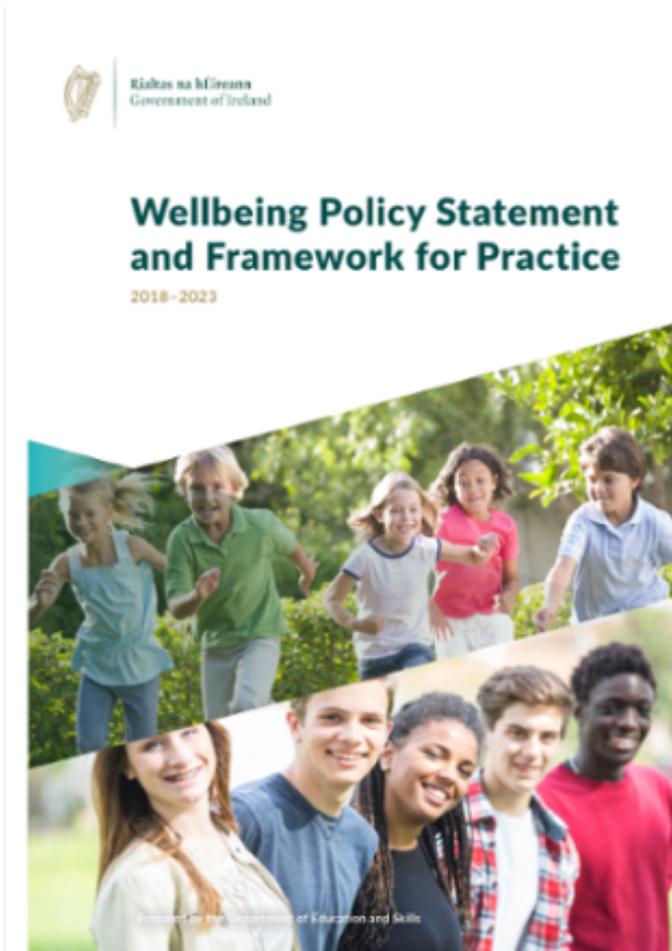
Appendix 1 -

National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) e-learning course



Appendix 2 –

The Promotion of wellbeing of our students is guided by the Department of Education’s “Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice’ document.



Appendix 3 – EAS

Employee Assistance Service: Spectrum Life

- Whatsapp: Text “Hi” to 0873690010
- Freephone 1800 411057
- Email: eap@spectrum.life

Appendix 4 –

Media, Parent, Staff Template letters and statements are available in the Critical Incident Folder available in hard copy from the Principal’s Office and also on iCloud.

Appendix 5 –

Agenda templates for guiding staff and CIMT are available in the Critical Incident Folder available in hard copy from the Principal’s Office and also on iCloud.

Appendix 6

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Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention Dublin North: Sara Maxwell	076 6958993 0860214241
State Examinations Commission	090 6442700
Unions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INTO • ASTI • TUI 	01 8047700 016040160 014922588