



Swords Educate Together National School

CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

Swords Educate Together National School 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, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

A Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) has been established to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

Review and Research

The CIMT has consulted resource documents provided to schools as well as publications listed in the resources section of this publication.

These include:

- *NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools 2016*
- *Guidelines for Schools on How to Respond to the Sudden Unexpected Death of a Student*
- *When Tragedy Strikes: Guidelines for Effective Critical Incident Management in Schools* (INTO/Ulster Teachers Union 2000)

What is a Critical Incident?

The staff and management of **Swords Educate Together National School**, recognises 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 the local community.

Types of incidents include:-

- *The death of a member of the school community (child/staff) 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.*

Aim

The aim of the CIMT is to help School Management and Staff to respond 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.

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, to prepare 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

- Health & Safety Policy
- Campus Evacuation Plan
- Occurring Regular fire drills.
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked.
- Pre-opening supervision in the school yard (from 8.20am)
- Front gate closed during school hours – left open between 1.10pm – 2.10pm. The back gate is closed.
- Front school door locked during school hours and inter-leading door opened with swipe.
- Rules of the playground – (Golden Rules)
- Code of Positive Behaviour Policy
- Bí Cineálta Policy
- Acceptable User Policy

Psychological safety

- ✓ The management and staff of *Swords Educate Together National 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.
- ✓ 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 an integral part of this provision. We have Well-Being Teams comprising students throughout the school, Teachers and Parent body.

- ✓ Staff have access to training for their role in S.P.H.E. (Professional Development providers)
- ✓ On line Safety and Cyberbullying
- ✓ Staff are familiar with the Child Safe Guarding Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures. Ref:-
 - Child Safe Guarding Statement and Risk Assessment.
 - Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children.
- ✓ Books and resources on difficulties affecting the 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.
- ✓ The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – HSE/ Mater CAMHS/ Community Gardai/ Tusla/ NEPS.
- ✓ Inputs to students by external providers are carefully considered in the light of criteria about student safety, the appropriateness of the content, and the expertise of the providers. (See Section 7.2 *NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools 2016/ SPHE DES, Circular 0022/2010 page 34*)
- ✓ The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy. (Bí Cineálta - 2025)
- ✓ There is a care system in place in the school. Students who are identified as being at risk ie. Children in receipt of Resource Hours/ Children through the attention of the Child Safe Guarding Procedures - are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. Class Teacher or Support Teachers), concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an agency.
- ✓ Staff is informed about how to access support for themselves (information posted on the school Staff Notice board).
- ✓ This Policy is designed for use during term time but it will be adapted if required out of term time.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team are selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for at least one school year. In general the roles will not change but depending on the situation at hand, they may change.

The members of the team will meet annually to review and update the policy and plan, {except in the case of a Critical Incident when meetings will be more frequent}.

Outside of this they will meet twice again.

Each member of the Team and all Staff have a copy of *NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools 2016*.

Each member of the Team also has a dedicated Critical Incident Folder. This contains a copy of the Policy and Plan. Materials particular to their role, to be used in the event of an incident, are kept in a filing cabinet in SEN Room 3, Room 19.

Roles

Swords Educate Together National School has assigned roles to:-

- Team Leader – Principal/ Deputy Principal
- Garda liaison – Principal/ Deputy Principal
- Staff liaison – Principal (initially)/ Deputy Principal/ Staff Representative
- Student liaison - ISM Team Member/ ANA
- Parent liaison – Board Teacher Nominee/ PTA Chairperson/ Principal/ Deputy Principal
- Community liaison – Deputy Principal/ ISM Member
- Media liaison – Principal/ BoM Chairperson
- Administrator – School Secretary/ Staff Representative

Team leader (Principal/ Deputy Principal)

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting.
- Coordinates the tasks of the team.
- Liaises with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS; Tusla
- Liaises with the bereaved family.
- 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.
- The Deputy Principal will take the lead in the absence of the Principal.

Garda liaison (Principal/ Deputy Principal)

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

Staff liaison (Principal (initially)/ Deputy Principal/ Staff Representative)

- 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 Support Services and gives them the contact number.

Student liaison (ISM Team Member/ ANA)

- Coordinates information for teachers about students they are concerned about.
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately).
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder).
- Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff.
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed.

Community/Agency Liaison (Deputy Principal/ ISM Member)

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of key parents, such as members of the Parents Teachers Association, emergency support services and other external contacts and resources.
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral.
- Is alerted 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.

Parent liaison (Board Teacher Nominee/ PTA Chairperson/ Principal/ Deputy Principal)

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader (and if there is a more suited member).
- Arranges parent meetings, if held.
- May facilitate such meetings and manage 'questions and answers'.
- Sets up room for meetings with parents.
- Maintains a record of parents seen.
- Meets with individual parents.
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder).
- **Advises/ requests** Parent body not to share any details on any type of Social Media (as per R22 page 89) – a message could be placed on the school website and on any other school social media account along the following lines - "You may be aware of a recent event within the school community. We ask you to respect the family's privacy and sensitivities by considering if you should post any comments, especially on social media. We will inform you through the normal channels of any relevant developments".

Media liaison (Principal and Chairperson of the Board ONLY)

- Principal and the Chairperson of the Board, in advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise and how they will be responded to.
- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the Educate Together Patron; DES; NEPS etc.
- **Only** the Principal and the Chairperson of the Board, will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews if **absolutely necessary**.
- A letter or text will be sent home to parents requesting them **not** to speak to the media.
- NEPS advise School Staff not to speak to media.
- The media **will not** be allowed on the school campus.

Administrator (School Secretary/ Staff Representative)

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
 - Parents or guardians
 - Staff
 - Emergency services.
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to (kept with Principal).
- Ensures that templates are on the school's system in advance and ready for adaptation (saved on external hard drive/ shared drive/ Aladdin).
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails.
- Photocopies materials needed.
- Maintains records.

Record keeping

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters, emails sent, and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc.

The School Secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, email, photocopying materials, etc (this may change with the situation).

Confidentiality and good name considerations

- The management and staff of Swords Educate Together National School 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 instance, *the term 'suicide' will not be used unless there is solid information that death was due to suicide, and that the family involved consents to its use. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may 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.*

Critical Incident Rooms

In the event of a critical incident:-

Staffroom/ Room 1 - will be the main room used to meet the staff.

Hall - for whole school.

Room 18 (SEN Room 2) - for smaller groups of students.

'Dream Den' - for students and parents (at different times and for different functions).

Foyer - "Candle" and "Book of Remembrance".

Room 19 (SEN Room 3) - for individual sessions with students.

Note:- Depending on the Critical Incident, Classrooms will be used ie. Classes will be doubled-up thus making classrooms available; and Rooms 17, 18, 19, 20 & 21 (SEN Rooms 1-5) will be used.

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

- All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan.
- Parent 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 Critical Incident Team has a personal copy of the plan.
- All new and temporary staff will be invited to a Critical Incident Team meeting. (Term 1, if possible).
- The plan will be reviewed and updated if necessary, at the first Critical Incident Team meeting, of each academic year. (October).

Ratified

16th April 2026

Principal

Chairperson

Short term actions – Day 1

- ✓ Gather accurate information.
- ✓ Who, what, when, where?
- ✓ Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly.
- ✓ If all CIMT members, are not present once the actions have started, a short call will be made to each of those member/s by the Team Leader.
- ✓ Contact external agencies.
- ✓ Arrange supervision for students and/or cover for staff members.
- ✓ Hold staff meeting for ALL staff. (Staff are asked not to call/ contact CIMT members for details).
- ✓ Agree schedule for the day with All Staff.
- ✓ Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately).
- ✓ Compile a list of vulnerable students.
- ✓ Contact/visit the bereaved family.
- ✓ Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media.
- ✓ Inform parents/ guardians. Family of Staff Member (if applicable).
- ✓ Hold end of day staff briefing.

Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

- ✓ Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1 - Team leader.
- ✓ Meet external Agencies.
- ✓ Meet whole Staff.
- ✓ Arrange support for Students, Staff, Parents/ Guardians.
- ✓ Visit the injured.
- ✓ Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements.
- ✓ Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service.
- ✓ Make decisions about school closure (BOM).
- ✓ Whole school closed for funeral so that all staff can attend - BOM decision. This would be for all staff that is teachers; ANA/SNA; secretaries; caretaker in the event of their death(BOM).

Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

- ✓ Monitor students for signs of continuing distress (Class teachers).
- ✓ Liaise with agencies regarding referrals.
- ✓ Plan for return of bereaved student(s).
- ✓ Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family.
- ✓ Decide on memorials and anniversaries for child/children/staff (BOM/Staff, Parents and Students).
- ✓ Review response to incident and amend plan (CIMT/ BoM/ Staff).

In the event of a Critical Incident out of term time, the Critical Incident Management Team will evaluate and respond accordingly – adapt the policy where necessary and ensure the relevant parts of the Critical Incident Policy is adhered to where applicable and as far as is practically possible.

Appendix 1
EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

(To be displayed in Staffroom, School Office and Principal's office etc)

<u>AGENCY</u>	<u>CONTACT NUMBERS</u>
GARDA	01- 6664700
HOSPITAL (Beaumont)	01 - 8377755
FIRE BRIGADE	999 or 112
Tusla	01-8738615
HSE - Community Care Team	01 - 8708000
CAMHS - Child and Family Centre	01 - 8823400
SCHOOL INSPECTOR Sinead Patten	sinead_patten@education.gov.ie
NEPS NEPS PSYCHOLOGIST	01 - 8892700 Nollaig Carberry 01 - 8892753
DES Communications Unit	01 - 8734700
INTO	01 - 8047700
IMPACT	01- 8171500
PRIEST/CLERGY/RABBI etc. Catholic (Presbyterian(Robert Deane) Hindu Temple Muslim	8401188/ 0877404729 8402308 0868881905 01-2080000 (Emergency no.)
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE SERVICE	1800 411 057

Appendix 2
Child Protection Contacts

Designated Liaison Person Aoife Malone
Deputy DLP Alice Hamilton
Garda Station Telephone: 01- 6664700
Local Contact for 'The children and family social services of the HSE' Telephone: 01 – 8708000 Address: Lakeshore Drive Airside Business Park Swords Co. Dublin
NEWB Telephone: 01- 8738615
NEPS Telephone: 01 - 8892700

Appendix 3
Critical Incident Management Team

Key Roles

<u>Role</u>	<u>Team Member</u>	<u>Names</u>
<u>Team Leader</u>	Principal/ Deputy Principal	Aoife & Alice
<u>Garda Liaison</u>	Principal/ Deputy Principal	Aoife & Alice
<u>Staff Liaison</u>	Principal (initially)/ Deputy Principal/ Staff Representative	Aoife, Alice, Sylvia and all Team members.
<u>Student Liaison</u>	Staff Representative/ ISL Team Member	Fiona, Sylvia and all Team members.
<u>Community / Agency Liaison</u>	Deputy Principal/ ISL Member	Alice, Fiona and all Team members.
<u>Parent Liaison</u>	Board Teacher Nominee/ PTA Representative /Principal/ Deputy Principal	Alice, Aisling, Aoife and all Team members.
<u>Media Liaison</u>	Principal/ BoM Chairperson	Aoife & Mairead
<u>Administrator</u>	School Secretary	Catriona & Lorraine
<u>Coordinator</u>	Deputy Principal / ISL Team Member	Alice & Fiona