



# Swords Educate Together National School

Roll Number 20145 O

## Garda Vetting (E-Vetting) Policy 2017

### General Information

<b>Name of School:</b>	Swords Educate Together N.S.
<b>Address:</b>	Applewood, Swords, Co. Dublin
<b>Telephone:</b>	01 – 8903899
<b>Email:</b>	info@swordseducatetogether.ie
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.swordseducatetogether.ie">www.swordseducatetogether.ie</a>
<b>Denominational Character:</b>	Multi-Denominational
<b>Patron:</b>	Educate Together

### Introductory Statement

This document was formulated to set out Swords Educate Together National School's policy and procedures for Garda Vetting. Swords ETNS ensures the confidentiality of all personal records and details that are revealed in relation to Garda vetting and the secure handling of post and storage of records in relation to same.

### Rationale

This policy was formulated to reflect the changes to the Garda Vetting procedure, following the publication of circular 0031/2016, with effect from 29<sup>th</sup> April 2016. It was further reviewed to reflect the introduction to E-Vetting by Educate Together, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2016. It is the intention that all members of the school community who have necessary and regular access to or contact with children must have successfully undergone the Garda Vetting process, prior to commencement of employment or relevant volunteer work in the school. In the future, staff will be re-vetted on a regular basis (as per DES Guidelines). This school will use Garda Vetting as part of a wider process to ensure the protection and safety of all members of the school community.

The process of Garda Vetting is carried out by the National Vetting Bureau (NVB). The function of the NVB is to provide Garda Vetting Disclosures in respect of an applicant to a registered organization. Disclosures can be 'Nil' (no record found) or consist of details of convictions, together with ancillary or consequential orders and/or records of any prosecutions pending and/or specified information.

## Aim

- To ensure that the school is a safe and secure environment for staff/parents/guardians and children.

## Policy

All offers of employment to non-teaching staff and all relevant volunteer roles\* are subject to satisfactory Garda Vetting Disclosures.

Failure to complete the Garda Vetting form will automatically disqualify the candidate. The provision of inaccurate information, such as an inaccurate date of birth or address, may also disqualify the applicant.

Applicants will be invited to a meeting regarding any disclosures of a criminal record or other information, including to address errors or cases of mistaken identity. In such cases, re-vetting will take place.

All returned Garda Vetting Disclosures will only be retained by the school in the event of a successful appointment and will be appropriately sealed and retained in a secure location.

In all decisions, it is recognised that the school's first priority is its responsibility to the protection of children attending the school as well as to staff and the wider school community.

*\* Volunteer roles which require Vetting, as specified in the Act and in the DES circular 0031/2016 include volunteers who assist the school on a regular basis (rather than occasional) and whose role involves coaching, mentoring, counselling, teaching or training of children. Roles which do not fall into these categories may not require Vetting.*

## Procedure

### **Ancillary Staff**

- Ancillary staff employed by the school must complete a Vetting Invitation Form NVB1 and furnish the school with their identification, as well as proof of address. The Principal will then complete the Garda Vetting Verification ID Form. The Garda Vetting Verification ID Form, and the completed Vetting Invitation Form NVB1 form will then be sent to Educate Together for processing. Ancillary Staff are responsible for completion of the remainder of the online process. Following satisfactory vetting, their Garda Vetting disclosure letter will then be stored securely in their personal files.

### **Teaching Staff**

- For teachers employed after 29<sup>th</sup> April 2016, the school is required to obtain a vetting disclosure from the National Vetting Bureau, prior to the commencement of employment. The disclosure letters, which are issued digitally by the National Vetting Bureau, will be printed and stored securely in their personal files.

- As an additional safeguard a Statutory Declaration and Form of Undertaking must be completed and provided to the school authority prior to making a teaching or non-teaching appointment of any duration. The Form of Undertaking is included in the DES appointment form.

### ***Substitute Teacher***

- For substitute teachers employed after 29<sup>th</sup> April 2016, the school is required to obtain a vetting disclosure from the National Vetting Bureau, prior to the commencement of employment. The disclosure letters, which are issued digitally by the National Vetting Bureau, will be printed and stored securely in their personal files.
- It will not be necessary under the Vetting Act to obtain a vetting disclosure from the National Vetting Bureau prior to employing a teacher as a substitute where the school authority has prior to 29 April 2016 received a copy of the Teaching Council vetting letter in respect of that teacher.

### ***Special Needs Assistants***

- Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) employed by the school must complete a Vetting Invitation Form NVB1 and furnish the school with their identification, as well as proof of address. The Principal will then complete the Garda Vetting Verification ID Form. The Garda Vetting Verification ID Form, and the completed Vetting Invitation Form NVB1 will then be sent to Educate Together for processing. SNA Staff are responsible for completion of the remainder of the online process. Following satisfactory vetting, their Garda Vetting disclosure letter will then be stored securely in their personal files.

### ***Substitute SNA***

- Substitute SNAs must complete a Vetting Invitation Form NVB1 and furnish the school with their identification, as well as proof of address. The Principal will then complete the Garda Vetting Verification ID Form. The Garda Vetting Verification ID Form, and the completed Vetting Invitation Form NVB1 form will then be sent to Educate Together for processing. SNA Staff are responsible for completion of the remainder of the online process. Following satisfactory vetting, their Garda Vetting disclosure letter will then be stored securely in their personal files.

### ***Parent(s)/Guardian(s)/Carer(s)***

- Upon enrolling their child(ren) in the school, parent(s)/guardian(s)/carer(s) will be invited to complete a Vetting Invitation Form NVB1 and furnish the school with their identification, as well as proof of address, should they wish to become involved in school activities on a regular basis (***regular basis refers to a frequency of more than once per week***). The Principal will then complete the Garda Vetting Verification ID Form. The Garda Vetting Verification ID Form, and the completed Vetting Invitation Form NVB1 form will then be sent to Educate Together for processing. Parents/Guardians/Carers are responsible for completion of the remainder of the online process. Following satisfactory vetting, their Garda Vetting disclosure letter will then be stored securely in a parents/carers Garda Vetting file. A list of successfully Garda Vetted parent(s)/carer(s) will be kept on a database in the school so that class teachers can invite Garda Vetted parent(s)/carer(s) to undertake activities with the class.

### **Other**

- Members of organisations working in the school (eg sports coaches, music teachers etc.) must provide their vetting disclosure from the National Vetting Bureau prior to commencing work in the school. Such members of the school community will not have unsupervised access to school pupils.
- Members of organisations working at the school in an after-school capacity (eg. drama class, after-school care etc.) are responsible for Garda Vetting through their own organisations, as such activities take place outside of school hours.

### **Exceptions**

- The Vetting Act allows for some limited exemptions to the requirement under section 12 of the Act to obtain a vetting disclosure from the Bureau. These exemptions provide that the school authority is not required to obtain a vetting disclosure under the Act prior to commencing the contract, permission or placement in the following circumstance: ***in the case of unpaid volunteers who assist the school on an occasional basis (3 times per school term) provided such assistance does not involve the coaching, mentoring, counselling, teaching or training of children or vulnerable persons.***

## **Contact Person(s)**

The school Principal/Board of Management Representative is designated as the contact person for the purpose of liaising with the authorised signatory in relation to vetting applications on behalf of the school. In their absence, the Deputy Principal will act as the liaison person.

Garda Vetting forms will be processed according to the policy outlined above. Completed forms for non-teaching staff and volunteers will be forwarded to the authorised signatory for Educate Together. The forms will be sent to Educate Together in a sealed envelope marked 'GV Private and Confidential'. Educate Together will return the Garda Vetting forms to the school principal/chairperson in an envelope marked 'GV Private and Confidential'.

The School Principal (or Deputy Principal in the absence of the School Principal) and Chairperson of BoM are appointed to handle any disclosures. Garda Vetting forms, information within these forms and disclosures will be handled in the strictest confidence.

## **Dealing with Disclosures**

If a Garda Vetting form is returned with a disclosure (i.e. a record of all prosecutions/charges, successful or not, pending or completed and/or convictions), the chairperson must bring the matter to the Selection Board (in the case of recruitment) or the Garda Vetting sub-committee (Principal/Deputy Principal BOM Nominee), in the case of a volunteer. They must then decide whether to proceed with the appointment/volunteer(s) or not.

In deciding whether a particular disclosure renders a candidate/volunteer unsuitable for selection, the school will have regard to:

- The nature of the disclosure and its possible relevance to the post
- The date of the offence and the age of the candidate at the time of the offence (offences many years in the past may be less relevant than more recent offences)
- The frequency of the offence (a series of offences will give more cause for concern than an isolated minor conviction)

The primary criterion in assessing the significance of a conviction or any other aspect of a disclosure is its relevance to child protection. An objective and balanced approach is critical in this regard.

In the case of a disclosure in relation to an otherwise suitable candidate who has been recommended for appointment, the selection board/Garda Vetting committee will meet with the candidate/volunteer (as outlined above) to discuss the disclosure. In this case, the responses of the candidate/volunteer should be written down verbatim and retained for future reference.

If the facts of the disclosure are seriously disputed e.g. disputed identity, the candidate/volunteer should complete a new Garda Vetting form with additional detail and the selection board/Garda Vetting sub-committee should discuss with the authorised signatory (Jessica Simpson) and re-vetting should take place (as outlined above).

If the selection board/Garda Vetting sub-committee decides to proceed with the appointment the Garda Vetting form will be placed in a signed and sealed envelope in the candidate's/volunteer's personal file and retained in a secure, confidential location in the school.

If the appointment is not approved, the Garda Vetting form should be securely destroyed.

## **Communication and Dissemination of Policy**

This policy will be circulated to all staff, parent(s)/guardian(s) and carer(s) after ratification and a copy of it will be available at the school office. It will also be available on the school website.

This policy will be brought to the attention of all staff members upon their appointment to the school.

## **Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed as necessary and particularly to comply with any relevant legislative changes or new DES guidelines or circulars.

## **Policy Ratification**

Policy adopted by the Board of Management on 05/07/16.

Signed:   
**Yvonne Coakley, Chairperson, Board of Management**