



Swords Educate Together National School

Roll Number 20145 O

General Information

Name of School	Swords Educate Together N.S.
Address	Applewood, Swords, Co. Dublin
Telephone	01 – 8903899
Email	info@swordseducatetogether.ie
Denominational Character	Multi – Denominational
Patron	Educate Together

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 Karl Breen, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

Our aim is to establish a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) 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:

- *Responding to Critical Incidents; Guidelines for Schools* (NEPS 2007)
- *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)
- *Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines* (IAS, National Suicide Review Group 2002)

What is a Critical Incident?

The staff and management of *Swords Educate Together National School* recognise 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*

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Aim

The aim of the CIMT is to help School Management and Staff to react 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, thus 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.

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
- Rules of the playground – (Golden Rules)
- Code of Positive Behaviour 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.
- ✓ Staff have access to training for their role in S.P.H.E. (Professional Development providers)
- ✓ Staff is familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures. Ref:-
 - Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools Circular 0065/2011
 - Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children
 - Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Staff is informed in the area of suicide awareness and A.H. is trained in interventions for suicidal students.



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- ✓ The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – HSE/ Mater CAMHS/ Community Gardai/ NEWB/ 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 of *Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines for Schools*)
- ✓ The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy. (Note: Department of Education and Skills - Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools - September 2013)
- ✓ 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 attending the “Rainbows Programme”/ Children through the attention of the Child Protection Policy - are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. Class Teacher or Resource 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 appropriate agency.
- ✓ Staff is informed about how to access support for themselves (information posted on the school Staff Notice board).
- ✓ The “Rainbows Programme” is offered in the school, usually, in the months of November through to March (14 week sessions)



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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.

The members of the team will meet annually to review and update the policy and plan. Outside of this they will meet twice again.

Each member of the Team and each Class level, has a copy of NEPS:-

- Responding to Critical Incidents (Guidelines for Schools)
- Responding to Critical Incidents (Resource Materials For Schools)

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.

Roles

Swords Educate Together National School have assigned roles to:-

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

Team leader

- 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;
- Liaises with the bereaved family.
- The Deputy Principal will take the lead in the absence of the team leader.

Garda liaison

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

Staff liaison

- 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
- 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.

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Student liaison

- At primary level, may co-ordinate 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

- 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

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader.
- Arranges parent meetings, if held.
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'.
- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy.
- Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system and ready for adaptation.
- 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).

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

- 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.
- Ensures that templates are on the school's system in advance and ready for adaptation.
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and faxes.
- Photocopies materials needed.
- Maintains records.

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Record keeping

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters 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, photocopying materials, etc.

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 parents.

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 informed of the details of the plan by the Deputy Principal or Principal (if D.P. not available).
- The plan will be reviewed and updated if necessary, at the first Critical Incident Team meeting, of each academic year. (October)

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Short term actions – Day 1

- ✓ Gather accurate information.
- ✓ Who, what, when, where?
- ✓ Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly.
- ✓ Contact external agencies.
- ✓ Arrange supervision for students.
- ✓ Hold staff meeting for All staff.
- ✓ Agree schedule for the day.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Hold end of day staff briefing.

Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

- ✓ Convene a CIMT meeting to review the Team leader events of day 1
- ✓ Meet external Agencies.
- ✓ Meet whole Staff.
- ✓ Arrange support for Students, Staff, Parents.
- ✓ Visit the injured.
- ✓ Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements.
- ✓ Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service.
- ✓ Make decisions about school closure (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 BOM/Staff, Parents and Students.



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This Policy was reviewed by the Board of Management on

Signed:.....
(Chairperson of the Board of Management)

Date:.....

Signed:.....
(Principal)

Date:.....

Appendices

Appendix 1: Critical Incident Management Team and Contact details. (Team Only)

Appendix 2: Emergency Contact List.

Appendix 3: Critical Incident Policy Resources.

Appendix 4: Child Protection Contacts.



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Appendix 2: Emergency Contact List.

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
NEWB	01-8738615
HSE - Community Care Team	01 - 8708000
CAMHS - Child and Family Centre	01 - 8823400
SCHOOL INSPECTOR John White	John_white@education.gov.ie (Navan Office)
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 (Paul Thorton) Presbyterian(Robert Deane) Hindu Temple Muslim	8401188/ 0877404729 8402308 0868881905 01-2080000 (Emergency no.)
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE SERVICE	1800 411 057



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Appendix 3

Critical Incident Policy Resources.

NEPS

- Responding to Critical Incidents (Guidelines for Schools)
- Responding to Critical Incidents (Resource Materials For Schools)
- Child Protection
- Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children
- Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools
- Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools Circular 0065/2011
- Child Protection Policy – S.E.T.N.S.
- Stay Safe Publication - A Parent's Guide – Child Abuse Prevention Programme

Publications

- INTO/Ulster Teacher Union (2000)-When Tragedy Strikes: Guidelines for Effective Critical Incident Management in Schools.
- City of Dublin VEC Psychological Services – Coping with a Major Crisis & When Something Terrible Happens
- Pat Donnelly, Barnardos (2002)
- Someone to Talk To: A Handbook in Childhood Bereavement

Books from Rainbows Grief Support Organization-

- Healing the Hurt - Suzy Yehl Marta
- Our Families - Teresa Dcaccia
- When People Die Teresa Dcaccia
- Our Feelings Teresa Dcaccia
- Getting used to Change Teresa Dcaccia
- It's Working Teresa Dcaccia

Other Books

- Young People and Loss – A Handbook for Schools – Robin Cooper
- End of life Rituals McRae Books
- When People Die (How can I deal with) – Sally Hewitt
- When People Die (Choices and Decisions) – Pete Sanders & Steve Myers
- Death – Helping Children Understand – Solas

Suicide

- Suicide Bereavement and Loss. Perspective and Responses Luke Monaghan (2001)
- Echoes of Suicide Siobhan Foster Ryan and Luke Monaghan (2001)
- "safeTALK" Resource Book – Suicide Alertness for Everyone - LivingWorks

DVDs

- "A life 2 live 4" – Console – Suicide Prevention
- "Facing up to Suicide" – Aware - A Pastoral Approach

Epilepsy

- 1 in 131 people have Epilepsy – The Irish Epilepsy Association
- My Lights go out – Julie Greene

Drug Education

- Local Drug Education Network Resource Pack - Swords Local Drugs Task Forces

Staff Supports

- INTO – Counselling Services – 1850 708 708/ 01 8047700
- Geno – "Take care of your Mental Health" - 083 009 9739
- Carecall – "Care call Well Being" – Freephone – 1800 411 057
- MyMind – "What goes on in your Mind" – 01 4433961

