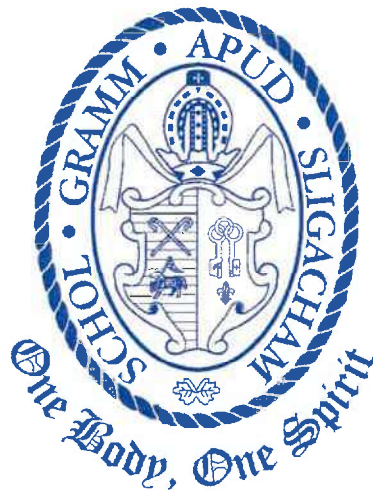


SLIGO GRAMMAR SCHOOL



SGS Critical Incident Policy

September 2026

1. Rationale

This Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP) outlines the procedures to be followed in the event of a critical incident. This policy has been created following the NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools (NEPS 2016). "A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school" (NEPS 2016). Having a plan empowers staff and makes them more independent and self-reliant. It enables staff to react quickly and effectively and to maintain a sense of control. It may also ensure that normality returns as soon as possible and that the effects on students and staff are limited. Sligo Grammar School is committed to creating a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the school.

2. What is a critical incident?

It is an incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school and disrupts the running of the school. The range of critical incidents includes:

- The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide
- An accident involving pupils or staff on or off the school premises
- A physical attack on staff member(s) or student(s) or intrusion into the school
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- An accident / tragedy in the wider community
- Health issues – e.g. meningitis, Bird / Swine Flu

3. Procedures

1. Gather accurate information:

Who? What? When? and Where? Is there a risk of further injury?

2. Contact appropriate agencies (see attached emergency contact list):

- In case of a death, establish contact with the family
- Emergency Services
- Medical Services
- NEPS • Health Board
- Board of Management
- PTA
- DES
- Examination and Assessment Manager, State Examinations Commission Branch - if State Examinations are in progress during a critical incident, the SEC must be contacted as soon as possible, preferably before Examinations are interrupted.

3. Convene a meeting with the Critical Incident Management Team and/or key staff.

This initial meeting is to agree short term actions – i.e. Day One and follow-on procedures if time allows.

- In the case of a death organise a home visit by two staff members.
 - Produce an agreed statement of the facts for staff, students, parents and the media.
 - Delegate responsibilities to the Critical Incident Management Team.
 - Keep phone line open and manned if appropriate. The agreed factual statement should be available to the telephonists. Staff appointed to take calls should be given clear guidance on what is appropriate to say.
 - Organise the timetable for the day. As far as possible maintain normal routines.
 - Arrange staff meeting if appropriate.
 - Organise student supervision during any staff meetings.
 - Decide if an outside professional is required for staff meeting – e.g. NEPS.
 - Identify high-risk students.
 - Identify staff who may be vulnerable.
 - Arrange when and how students will be informed.
- (a) students directly involved. (b) students not directly involved.
- If appropriate, provide (a) a suitable area for students to congregate (b) a suitable room for students and parents to meet.

Staff Liaison

Inform staff as soon as possible to prevent them hearing from other, sometimes inappropriate sources.

(a) Staff Meeting – All staff to attend, including ancillary staff. It may be necessary to do this in two shifts thereby ensuring that staff are available to support students and for cover at all times.

- Give an account of the facts as known.
 - State what has been done already.
 - Hold discussion with staff and make decision on agreed approach to sharing information with students.
 - Decide what is going to be done.
 - Specify support services which will be provided for students and staff.
 - Devise procedure for identifying vulnerable students
 - Publicise timetable for the day and beyond if possible or necessary.
 - Distribute relevant handouts.
 - Advise staff on dealing with parents and the media.
- (b) Information will be continually updated and displayed in the staffroom.
- (c) Informal briefings will be given during morning break and lunchtime.

Student Liaison

Inform students as soon as possible to prevent their hearing from other, sometimes inappropriate, sources. Students will generally be informed in form groups by one or two team members – i.e. Form Teacher, Coordinators, Deputy Principal or Headmaster. It is generally thought that support is best given by adults known to the children.

- Give the facts as known to avoid speculation.
- Say what has been done already.
- Say what is going to be done.
- Identify support services which will be provided for students.

- Specify who to talk to and where to go when they need support.
- Timetable for the day and beyond if available.
- Allow students to ask questions, tell their story and express feelings.
- Distribute relevant handouts (may happen at later meetings).
- Advise students on dealing with the media and one another.

Organise the reunion of students with their parents, if necessary.

- Inform students that their parents/guardians will be collecting them as soon as possible.
- Facilitate distressed students and their parents by providing a private room where they can meet following an incident. This could be a very emotional time.
- Where appropriate, offer help with transport, especially for younger children.

Parent Liaison

Children directly involved

Parents/guardians should be contacted as soon as possible, and this first contact will need to be handled with great sensitivity. The steps involved are set out below:

- Agree who should share information with parents and how this should be done.
- Make a list of parents/guardians who have been contacted and those who still need to be told to avoid duplication of messages.
- Give parents/guardians relevant and factually accurate information.
- Set a room aside for distressed students to meet their parents/guardians.
- Provide support to parents who are on their own when they arrive at the school.
- Give out telephone numbers for enquiries.

Children not directly involved: The parents of other children in the school should be informed of the incident and warned that their child may be upset. Send a letter to parents stating the facts about the incident. It may not be appropriate at this point to disclose the names of those involved. Give details of the support structures in place to help the children cope with the tragedy. Advise parents on who they may contact at the school if they would like advice or assistance.

Organise the reunion of students with their parents, if necessary.

- Inform students that their parents/guardians will be collecting them as soon as possible.
- Facilitate distressed students and their parents by providing a private room where they can meet following an incident. This could be a very emotional time.
- Where appropriate, offer help with transport, especially for younger children.

4. Additional Considerations

School Assemblies

Special School Assemblies will be held in the event of the death of a student or a member of staff.

School Closure in the event of the death of a student or staff member.

In consultation with the Board of Directors / Management and the Department of Education, the School may be closed as a mark of respect and to facilitate attendance at the funeral service.

Special School Opening

It may be considered necessary to open the school to allow students, staff members and parents to meet and provide support for one another.

Debriefing

A debriefing session will take place after any serious incident.

5. Critical Incident Management Team

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. In this school, the members of the Pastoral Care Team (PCT) constitute the CIMT. The PCT meets weekly to discuss the needs of students who are suffering from difficulties of any kind. The group then considers an appropriate response, liaising with the student, staff members and home. The overall aim of the PCT is to review particular cases and allocate support. The group will also address any general concerns regarding the welfare of students.

Membership of the PCT/CIMT is as follows:

Headmaster (chair), Deputy Principal, Junior Coordinator, Senior Coordinator, SEN Staff Teachers, Chaplain and Guidance Counsellor. Other relevant staff may be added as appropriate. In the event of a critical incident, the Headmaster will convene an initial meeting of the CIMT.

Michael Hall - Team Leader

Jimmy Staunton - Deputy Team Leader / Staff Liaison Representative

Fiona Kilroy - Junior School Representative

Tommy Cradock - Senior School Representative

Padraig Giblin - Transition Year Students

Matron - Boarding Students Representative

Cecilia McGuinness - Guidance Counsellor

School Secretary - Front Office Staff

Rev. P Bamber - Chaplain

Oisín McBreen - Home Youth Liaison Services

The Team Leader may co-opt other staff members depending on the nature of the incident. These may include members of the Guidance Department, Subject Teachers, Office Staff, Bursar, etc.

Roles and Responsibilities:

In the event of a critical incident, members of the CIMT will be assigned various roles and responsibilities. Some possible roles are:

- Team Leader
- Garda Contact
- Staff Contact
- Student Contact
- Parent Contact
- Community/Agency Contact
- Media Contact
- Administrator

6. Key Components in Successful Responses to Critical Incidents

Prevention, preparation, intervention, follow-up

A critical incident may suddenly overwhelm some, or all, of the school community. The school takes every effort to maintain a healthy and safe school. It has systems and structures in place which help to ensure the safety and resilience of the school community, thus preparing them to cope with a range of events. Some of these measures are listed below:

- Appropriate SPHE, RSE and Wellbeing curriculum provision.
- Effective pastoral care systems including Subject Teachers, Coordinators, Guidance Counsellor, Chaplain, Special Educational Needs team, PCT (Pastoral Care Team).
- Procedures to identify and care for vulnerable students providing support.
- Students identified as being at risk are referred to the appropriate staff member in a timely manner.
- Open communication with home, where necessary.
- Student Safeguarding Statement and awareness of Child Protection requirements
- The names of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and the Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDL P) are known by school staff.
- External speakers, invited in line with circular letter 0043/2018, to talk to students on various topics related to wellbeing, depression and mental health.
- Participation in initiatives designed to enhance awareness around wellbeing and mental health, such as the Amber Flag campaign.
- Appropriate referral procedures and interagency liaison.
- Awareness of Meitheal and Cara support systems.
- A comprehensive set of policies which aim to create a safe school environment, including Suicide Prevention, Substance Use, Health and Safety procedures, Code of Behaviour, Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Staff have access to relevant training, where necessary.
- Staff are informed about how they can access support for themselves.
- Up-to-date contact details for all members of the school community, readily available.
- Up-to-date medical information on students with allergies, epilepsy etc.

The measures above aim to ensure the physical and emotional wellbeing of the school community.

7. Resources

In preparing this document, the school has consulted resource documents available to schools on www.education.ie and www.nosp.ie.

These include:

- 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)
- Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013).

Where necessary, the school will use the relevant documents, outlined above, for further guidance and resources.

References to NEPS Resource materials for schools

Ref No; Content;

R1 Student contact Record

R2 – 5 Sample letters after a Critical Incident

R6 Sample announcement to the media

R7 A Classroom session following news of a critical incident

R8 Children's understanding and reaction to death

R9 Stages of grief

R10 How to cope when something terrible happens

R11 Reactions to a critical incident

R12 Grief after suicide or suspected suicide

R13 Reintegration of the bereaved child in school

R14 Ways to help your child through this difficult time

R15 A general interview guide for Guidance Counsellors, Chaplains, designated staff

R16 A checklist – students at risk

R17 Exploring suicide risk

R18-20 Frequently asked questions

R21 Critical Incident Policy and Plan Template

R22 Critical Incident Management Template for school plan

R23 Emergency Contact List

8. Confidentiality

Management and staff of Sligo Grammar School have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of public statements. Members of school staff will bear this in mind and will seek to ensure that students do so also.

9. Emergency Contact List

Our Eircode is F91 YW68

Garda - Sligo 071915700

Emergency: Ambulance & Fire Brigade 999

Sligo University Hospital 0719171111

School Doctor: Dr Jane Dorman 0719142254

Eastern Health Board / Child & Family Centre 1800 520520

Chairperson of the Board of Management: Rev. Noel Regan 071-9166253

State Examination Commission Main Phone Number: 0906 442700

Main Fax Number: 0906 442744

NEPS Psychologist: Alan Gregory 0761108701

Sligo NEPS, Units 3-6 Beulah Buildings, Finisklin Road, D7VC Tel: (01) 8650701

ASTI 01 6040160

01-8972760 (Fax)

JMB, Emmet House, Milltown, Dublin 01 283 8255 01269 5461 (Fax)

NAPD 01662 7025

Clergy: School Chaplain Canon. Patrick Bamber 083 3658066 / 0719153125

Email: calry@elphin.anglican.org)

Sligo Home Youth Liaison Services Oisin McBreen 087 6031069

Local Support Services

HSE Community Mental Health, Markievicz House, Barrack Street, Sligo. 071 914 2111

Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) 07191 3960

Samaritans, 3 The Mall, Sligo 116 123 free from any phone 0330 094 5717 local call charges apply

Pieta House. Northside Resource Centre, Forthill, Sligo. 074 9126594

Other Support Services

- ChildLine gives support to young people through a freephone 24 hour listening service and through it's website. All calls are free of charge and confidential. Freephone Helpline: 1800 666 666 Text support: Text list to 50101 (This is an automated free text support service)
- The Citizens Information Service provides free information about all public services in Ireland. Lo-call: 1890 777 121
- Tusla Child and Family Agency supports Family Resource Centres, marriage/relationship, bereavement & child counselling services and operates the Family Mediation Service. See their website for all services. Tusla.ie
- Teen-Line Ireland is a confidential helpline service for teenagers, dealing with any problems or worries they are experiencing. Freephone helpline: 1800 833 634 8pm to 11pm. Text: Teen to 50015
- Aware is an organisation that provides information and emotional support to those who experience depression, and their families. Freephone: 1800 80 48 48
- Barnardos Children's Bereavement Service is a service for children and young people run by Barnardos. Dublin, Tel: 01 453 0355, Email: bereavement@barnardos.ie Cork, Tel: 021 431 0591, Email: bereavement@cork.barnardos.ie Barnardos Bereavement Helpline, Tel: 01 4732110 (Monday–Thursday 10am-12noon)
- The Bereavement Counselling Service, Administration Office, Dublin Street, Baldoyle, Dublin 13, Tel: 01 8391766 · Counselling
- A GP (Family doctor) or others such as a youth worker or school guidance counsellor can help you to find a professional counsellor or therapist in your area.

Review History

Completed 2009

Review History

Updated and Reviewed 15/09/2026

Updated and Reviewed 15/09/2025

Updated and Reviewed 2/01/2019

Reviewed Sept 2017

updated 9/11/2015

Updated 8/11/2013

Policy reviewed and approved by the Board of Management: __15 Sept 2026__

Signed:  Date: __15 Sept 2026__
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed:  J. MAN J. M Date: __15 Sept 2026__
Headmaster

Due for next review: __August 2027__