



Critical Incident Management Policy

Malahide/Portmarnock 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 Emer Hoy, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP) as one element of the school's policies and plans.

Review and Research

The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) have consulted resource documents available to schools on www.education.ie and www.nosp.ie 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)
- Well-Being in Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 2015)

What is a critical incident?

The staff and management of Malahide/Portmarnock 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 our local community. Types of incidents might include:

- *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*
- *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*
- *A physical attack on student/staff*
- *The disappearance of a member of the school community*

Aim

The aim of the CIMP 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 (Appendices 1 and 2). 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 and Safety Policy
- Termly health and safety risk assessments
- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Inner gate closed during school hours
- Pre-opening supervision in the school yard
- All exit school doors locked during school hours, except fire doors, which remain closed
- Code of Positive Behaviour Policy
- Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures
- Rules of the playground – (Golden Rules)

Psychological safety

The management and staff of Malahide/Portmarnock 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. As part of the curriculum, it addresses 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 SPHE
- Staff are 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 (Appendix 3)
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness. National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS) support would be sought should the need arise
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – HSE/Mater CAMHS/Community Gardaí/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 DES Circulars 0022/2010
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- There is a care system in place in the school using the "Continuum of Support" approach which is outlined in the NEPS documents published on 2007 for primary schools and the Checklist-Students At Risk (Appendix 4). These documents are available in hardcopy in the Snowdrop Room, on www.education.ie and in the staff shared folder.

- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to a designated staff member (e.g. SET Team, Principal and Deputy Principal), concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. A summary of this support is set out in Appendix 5. Parents are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves (information posted on the school staff noticeboard).

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team were 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. Each member of the team has a dedicated critical incident folder. This contains a copy of the policy and appendices, a copy of Responding to Critical Incidents NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools.

Team leader: *Emer Hoy*

Role

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management; Patron body; DES; NEPS
- Liaises with the bereaved family

Garda liaison: *Emer Hoy*

Role

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

Staff liaison: *Ríona Wise*

Role

- 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 the EAS (Education and Support Services) and gives them the contact number.

Student liaison: *Lesleyann Cochrane*

Role

- 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)
- Maintains student contact records (Appendix 6)
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

Parent liaison: *Julien Devergie*

Role

- 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)

Community/agency liaison: *Lorcan Smith*

Role

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
 - Key parents, such as members of the Parent Teacher Association (Appendix 7)
- Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources (Appendix 8)
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Is alert 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

Media liaison: *Emer Hoy and Trish Clerkin* (Principal and Chairperson of the Board ONLY)

Role

- In advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise and how they might be responded to (e.g. students being interviewed, photographers on the premises, etc)
- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the relevant teacher unions etc.
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)
- A text will be sent home to parents requesting them not to speak to the media. (Appendix 9)

Administrator: *Margaret O'Reilly*

Role

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
 - Parents or guardians
 - Teachers
 - 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 (Appendices 9 and 10)
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

Record keeping: Margaret O'Reilly

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.

Margaret O'Reilly will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

Confidentiality and good name considerations

Management and staff of Malahide/Portmarnock Educate Together National 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 seek to ensure

that students do so also, e.g. 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

Critical Incident Rooms	
In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes	
Room Name:	Designated Purpose:
<i>Staffroom</i>	Main room for meeting staff
<i>Playground / class classroom / individual classrooms / SET rooms</i>	Meetings with students
<i>Principal's office / Playground / class classroom / offsite location</i>	Meetings with parents
<i>Principal's office / Playground / class classroom / offsite location</i>	Meetings with media
<i>SET rooms</i>	Individual sessions with students
<i>SET rooms / Principal's office</i>	Meetings with other visitors

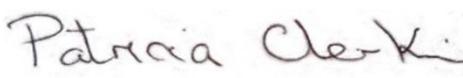
Reception - "Candle" and "Book of Remembrance".

Note:- Depending on the Critical Incident, Classrooms will be used ie. Classes will be doubled-up thus making classrooms available.

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 Principal.
- The plan will be updated annually.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 26th October 2022.

Signed: 
(Chairperson of the Board of Management)

Date: 26/10/22



Signed:
(Principal)

Date: 26/10/22

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Critical Incident Plan A

Appendix 2: Critical Incident Plan B: Lockdown

Appendix 3: Critical Incident Policy Resources

Appendix 4: Checklist – Students at Risk

Appendix 5: Teachers helping students in time of crisis or emergency

Appendix 6: Student contact record

Appendix 7: PA Contact List

Appendix 8: Emergency Contact List

Appendix 9: Template Texts

Appendix 10: Template Letters

Appendix 11: Critical Incident Management Team and Contact details.

Appendix 1

Critical Incident Plan A

Communicate Plan A is in operation via MPETNS Emergency Group message.

Short term actions – Day 1

Task	Role
Gather accurate information	Team Leader
Who, what, when, where?	Team Leader
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	Team Leader
Contact external agencies	Team Leader /Community Liaison
Arrange supervision for students	Student Liaison
Hold staff meeting	All Staff
Agree schedule for the day	All Staff
Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately). Appendix A Classroom Session following news of a Critical Incident	Team Leader/ Student Liaison/Class teacher
Compile a list of vulnerable students	Team Leader /Student Liaison
Contact/visit the bereaved family	Team Leader /Parent Liaison
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	Team Leader /Media Liaison
Inform parents	Team leader / Parent Liaison
Hold end of day staff briefing	All Staff

Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Role
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Team Leader
Meet external Agencies.	Team Leader /Community Liaison
Meet whole Staff	Team Leader
Arrange support for Students, Staff, Parents	Team Leader /Student Liaison /Parent Liaison /Community Liaison
Visit the injured	Team Leader /Student Liaison
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Team Leader

Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	All Staff
Make decisions about school closure	Chairperson of BoM

Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

Task	Role
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class Teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Team Leader /Student Liaison
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Team Leader /Student Liaison
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	Team Leader /Student Liaison/Parent Liaison
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	School Community
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM

Appendix 2

Critical Incident Plan B: Lockdown

Communicate Plan B in operation via MPETNS Emergency Group message

If intruder enters school building:

- Mobile phone used to alert staff
- Ensure all children with a staff member
- Lock doors (where possible), close windows and blinds
- Everyone hide under tables. If in toilet, hide in cubicles, with legs up.
- Phone 999

If intruder enters playground:

- Bring all children into school and lockdown school
- Phone 999

Appendix 3

Critical Incident Policy Resources

NEPS

- Responding to Critical Incidents (NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools 2016) located in School Plan and in staff share folder
- 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 - Malahide/Portmarnock 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

Appendix 4

CHECKLIST - STUDENTS AT RISK

This checklist may be used as an aid by school staff who are concerned about a student. It should be remembered that the checking of a number of items for any one student may point to other problems. Indication of a number of these factors in any one student should always be followed up.

Unexpected reduction of academic performance	
Talking about suicide	
Ideas and themes of depression, death and suicide in their work	
Making statements about hopelessness, helplessness or worthlessness	
Change in mood and marked emotional instability	
Significant grief or stress	
Withdrawal from relationships	
Break up of an important relationship	
Discipline problems, being in trouble in school	
Withdrawal from extra-curricular activities	
Giving personal belongings away	
Loss of interest in things one cares about	
Neglect of physical appearance	
Physical symptoms with emotional cause	
High risk behaviours	
Alcohol or drug abuse	
Bullying or victimization	
History of suicidal behaviour e.g. cutting or overdose risk behaviours	
Family history of suicide/attempted suicide	
Over use or reliance on social media	

STAFF HELPING STUDENTS IN TIME OF CRISIS OR EMERGENCY

1. LISTEN
2. PROTECT
3. CONNECT
4. MODEL
- 5 .TEACH

THINK ABOUT your students' "DIRECT EXPERIENCE" with the event i.e. FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE of the event (physically experiencing or directly seeing it as it happens).

After the event, changes can happen in students' thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. Your students may worry about family members, classmates, friends, or pets they care about, and may worry that it will happen again. Common reactions to crises and emergencies include trouble sleeping, problems at school and with friends, trouble concentrating and listening, and not finishing work. Your students may become more irritable, sad, angry, or worried as they think about what has happened, and as they experience recovery efforts after the event.

When students share their experiences, thoughts and feelings about the event, LISTEN for RISK FACTORS for adverse reactions.

Risk factors that may indicate a need for counselling referral for students include:

- loss of a family member, schoolmate, or friend
- observing serious injury or the death of another person
- family members or friends missing after the event, past traumatic experiences or losses
- getting hurt or becoming sick
- home loss, family moves, changes in neighbourhoods/schools, and/or loss of belongings.

If a student has had any of these experiences, you may wish to consider referring her or him to the HSE services. Your NEPS psychologist will be available to provide support and advice. Now that you know what can affect your students after a disaster, school crisis, or emergency, you're ready to **Listen, Protect, Connect, and Model & Teach**

1. Listen, Protect, Connect, Model & Teach

The first step after an event is to listen and pay attention to what they say and how they act. Your students may also show their feelings in non-verbal ways, like increased behavioural problems or increased withdrawal. Let your students know you are willing to listen and talk about the event, or to make referrals to talk to an appropriate professional, if they prefer it. Use the following questions to talk with your students. You can listen for clues that indicate when students are having a hard time. Write down a few examples that may be helpful to note:

- What might be preventing a student from coming to or staying in school?
- What might be preventing a student from paying attention or doing homework?
- What might be preventing a student from returning to other school based activities?

Listen, observe, and note any changes in:

- Behaviour and/or mood

- School performance
- Interactions with schoolmates and teachers
- Participation in school-based activities
- Behaviours at home that parents/guardians discuss with you.

Listen, **2. Protect**, Connect, Model & Teach

You can help make your students feel better by doing some or all of the following:

- Answer questions simply and honestly, clearing up any confusion students may have about what happened
- Let your students know that they are not alone in their reactions
- Provide opportunities for your students to talk, draw, and play, but don't force it
- Talk to your students about what is being done by the school and community to keep everyone safe from harm
- Watch for anything in the environment that could re-traumatize your students
- Keep your eyes and ears open for bullying behaviours
- Maintain daily routines, activities and structure with clear expectations and consistent rules
- Make adjustments to assignments to be sensitive to students' current level of functioning
- Limit access to live television and the Internet that show disturbing scenes of the event
- Remember, what is not upsetting to adults may upset and confuse students, and vice versa
- Encourage students to "take a break" from the crisis focus with activities unrelated to the event
- Find ways for your students to feel helpful to your classroom, the school, and the community
- List other things you do that help your students feel better. Sharing this list with other teachers may increase ideas to help your students.

Listen, Protect, **3. Connect**, Model & Teach

Reaching out to people in your school and community will help your students after a school crisis or emergency. These connections will build strength for everyone. Consider ways to make some or all of the following connections:

- "Check in" with students on a regular basis
- Find resources that can be supportive to your students and staff
- Restore interactive school activities, including sports, club meetings, student projects, and student councils, coaches, etc.)
- Encourage student activities with friends, including class projects and extracurricular activities
- Empathise with your students by allowing a little more time for them to learn new materials
- Build on your students' strengths by encouraging them to find ways to help them use what they have learned in the past to help them deal with the event
- Remind your students that major disasters, crises, and emergencies are rare
- Discuss feeling safe and times they have felt safe
- List programs and activities that connect you and your students with the community
- Share your list with other teachers to create a larger list of activities and resources.

Listen, Protect, Connect, **4. Model** & Teach

As you help your students after a disaster, crisis, or emergency, your efforts may be more successful – and you may be less stressed – if you keep in mind:

- It is good to be aware of your own thoughts, feelings, and reactions, these can be seen and may affect your students
- How you cope and behave after an event will influence how your students cope and behave. Your students will be watching you for both verbal and non-verbal cues
- Monitor conversations that students may hear
- Acknowledge the difficulty of the situation, but demonstrate how people can come together to cope after such an event.

Listen, Protect, Connect, Model & **5. Teach**

Talk to your students about expected reactions after a crisis (emotional, behavioural, cognitive, and physiological). There are “normal” reactions to abnormal events.

- Different people may have very different reactions, even within the same family
- After the event, people may also have different amounts of time they need to cope and adjust
- Encourage your students to identify and use positive coping strategies to help them after the event
- Help your students problem-solve to get through each day successfully
- Help your students set small “doable” goals and share in these achievements as “wins” for the students and your classroom
- Remind students that with time and assistance, things generally get better. If they don’t, they should let a parent or teacher know
- Over time, you, your students, their families, your classroom, can EXPECT RECOVERY.

Emergency Contact List

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

<u>AGENCY</u>	<u>CONTACT NUMBERS</u>
FIRST INSTANCE	999/112
GARDA	Malahide – 6664600
HOSPITAL	Beaumont – 8093000 Temple street – 8784200 Swiftcare Clinic, Airside, Swords – 1890 866 966
GPs	Dr. Joanne Daly, 19a Old Street, Malahide 8454265 Dr. Anne Flanagan and Dr Valerie Flood Portmarnock Family Practice 7 Portmarnock Shopping Centre, Strand Road, Portmarnock. 8461300
FIRE BRIGADE	999/112 6734000
NEWB/Educational Welfare Service Child and Family Agency	7718815
TUSLA	7718500
HSE - Community Care Team	Main St, Malahide - 8452076
CAMHS - Child and Family Centre	Mater CAMHS Swords, Team E Swords Health Centre 8138260 Opening hours: 9-5 (closed for lunch 1-2)
SCHOOL INSPECTOR	
NEPS NEPS PSYCHOLOGIST	Patricia Mullan 0873452399
DES Communications Unit	Athlone: (090) 6483600 Dublin: (01) 8896400 Tullamore: (057) 9324300 Press office: press@education.gov.ie Dept of Education and Skills Press Office Marlborough St. Dublin 1 (01) 8896400
INTO	National Office: 8047700/ 1850 708708 District representative: Feargal Brougham: 085-7080189
IMPACT	Dublin: 8171500
PRIEST/CLERGY/RABBI etc.	Catholic: Frank Reburn 8451902 Presbyterian: Alistair Dunlop 085-8501837 Jewish: Zalman Shimon Lent 4923751 Hindu: Ireland Vinayaka Temple 086-8881905 Muslim: Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland 2080000
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE SERVICE	1800 411057
EDUCATE TOGETHER HEAD OFFICE	Phone: 4292500 Fax: 4292502 Email: info@educatetogether.ie

Appendix 9

Texts to be sent to school community

In case of event happening during school day:

- An incident has happened in the school. The children are safe. We would ask you to refrain from phoning the school in order to keep phone lines open. We will keep you informed of further developments as they arise. Please do not come to the school early. If a different collection time is required, we will let you know.
- An incident has happened in the school. The children are safe. We would ask you to refrain from phoning the school in order to keep phone lines open. We would ask you to come and collect your child/ren at your earliest convenience. Please email emergency@mpetns.ie if somebody not previously authorised is collecting your child.
- An incident has happened in the school. The children are safe. We would ask you to refrain from phoning the school in order to keep the phone lines open. We would ask you to come and collect your child/ren from (*dedicated collection point*). Please email emergency@mpetns.ie if somebody not previously authorised is collecting your child.

Follow up text to be sent:

- The earlier reported incident is now over and school is back operating as normal.

Do not contact media text:

- As you are aware, an incident has happened to a member of the school community. We would ask everybody to refrain from contacting the media or commenting on social media. We will keep you informed of further developments as they arise.

Sample letter to parents/guardians – violent death



Malahide Road, Dublin 17,
D17DR97, Ireland.

Tel: 01-8455956 Email: info@mpetns.ie

Dear Parents

I need to inform you about a very sad event that has happened.

(*EDIT*Give accurate information about the incident, but avoid using the word murder as this will not be established until the court case is completed).

We have shared this information and had discussions with all of our students so that they know what has happened. School staff members have been available for students on an on-going basis today. Other support personnel (*EDIT*including psychologists etc, according to actual arrangements) are available to advise staff. This support will continue to be available to advise staff in their support of students(*EDIT*if appropriate insert how long).

The death of any young person is tragic, but a violent death is even more difficult. It is hard to have to teach our children about the violence in our world and to accept that sometimes we do not have the power to prevent it.

This death may cause a variety of reactions in your child. Some children/young people may be afraid for their own life and for the lives of those they love. Take time to listen to their fears and reassure them that what has happened is rare.

We have enclosed some additional information that may be useful during this time.

The media are in the vicinity of the school and may approach you or your children. You need not respond to their questions if you are approached. We will not allow the media to interview your child at school and our general advice is that you should not let your children be interviewed. They are not mature enough to judge what to say and may say something they will regret later.

Young people frequently turn to social media to see what others are saying, or to find out more. At these times it is important that you monitor their use and engage with them about what they read. We urge you to emphasise and reinforce the need to be extremely sensitive and careful about what they post.

(If planned) A support meeting for parents is planned for (date, time and place). At that time we can talk further about how to help ourselves and our children.

Our thoughts are with (*EDIT* family name) and with each of you.

Sincerely

Emer Hoy Principal

Sample letter to parents/guardians – sudden death/accident



Malahide Road, Dublin 17,
D17DR97, Ireland.

Tel: 01-8455956 Email: info@mpetns.ie

Dear Parents

The school has experienced (**EDIT* the sudden death, accidental injury, etc.*) of *Name of student(s)*. We are deeply saddened by the deaths/events.

(**EDIT* Brief details of the incident, and in the event of a death, perhaps some positive remembrances of the person lost*).

Our thoughts are with (**EDIT* family name*).

We have support structures in place to help your child cope with this tragedy. (**EDIT* Elaborate*).

It is possible that your child may have some feelings and questions that he/she may like to discuss with you. It is important to give factual information that is appropriate to their age.

You can help your child by taking time to listen and by encouraging them to express their feelings.

All children are different and will express their feelings in different ways. It is not uncommon for children to have difficulty concentrating or to be fearful, anxious, or irritable. They may become withdrawn, cry, complain of physical aches and pains, have difficulty sleeping or have nightmares. Some may not want to eat. These are generally short term reactions. Over the course of the days to come, please keep an eye on your child and allow him/her to express their feelings without criticism.

Although classes will continue as usual, I anticipate that the next few days will be difficult for everyone.

(**EDIT* Optional*) An information night for parents is planned for (**EDIT* date, time and place*). At that time, further information about how to help children in grief will be given.

We have enclosed some information which you may find useful in helping your child through this difficult time.

Young people frequently turn to social media to see what others are saying, or to find out more. At these times it is important that you monitor their use and engage with them about what they read. We urge you to emphasise and reinforce the need to be extremely sensitive and careful about what they post.

If you would like advice you may contact the following people at the school. (**EDIT* Details*). Principal's signature

Sincerely

Emer Hoy
Principal

Sample announcement to the media

This can be used as a template by schools to be emailed, posted on the school social media site or given to the media. It may help to decrease the number of media calls and callers to the school.

In some instances it is not appropriate to provide names or information that might identify individuals.

This announcement will need to be changed based upon confidentiality issues, the wishes of the victim's family and the nature of the incident.

My name is *Emer Hoy* and I am the Principal of *Malahide Portmarnock Educate Together National School*. We learned this morning of the death of (**EDIT*one of our students or Name of student*). This is a terrible tragedy for the (**EDIT* Family Name*) family(ies), our school and our community. We are deeply saddened by these events. Our sympathy and thoughts are with the (**EDIT* Family Name*) family and friends.

(**EDIT*Name*) was a (**EDIT* e.g. 5th year boy*) and will be greatly missed by all who knew him/her.

We have been in contact with his/her parents and they have requested that we all understand their need for privacy at this difficult time.

Offers of support have been pouring in and are greatly appreciated. Our school have implemented our Critical Incident Management Plan.

Psychologists from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and (**EDIT*insert other information if relevant*) have been with us all day supporting and advising teachers in their efforts to assist our students at this time.

The teachers have been helping students to deal with the tragic event.

The school has been open to parents, to support them and to offer them advice and guidance.

We would ask you to respect our privacy at this time.

Thank you.