



St Francis of Assisi
PARISH PRIMARY SCHOOL

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY

Responding To A Traumatic Or Critical Incident In Which The School Is Involved

As a Catholic School we are very aware of our responsibility to be pastorally alert and consciously active in our Christian duties. Schools may become directly or indirectly involved in a tragic or traumatic event. The incident may involve loss of life, serious injury or emotional disturbance. The incident may occur in the school environment or outside. It may involve staff, students or those close to them. The network of those involved in a traumatic event can be wide, especially if it directly involves the school. Feelings of grief and loss can continue over long periods of time. Counselling should be provided for all those who need it. This may include many who do not seem to be closely connected to the event or the individuals involved. The school may be in a position to help grieving families at difficult times, e.g. through the school's participation in the funeral service. While school should operate as normally as possible, some degree of flexibility should exist. It is essential that people be given clear, accurate information at all times.

Action To Be Taken As A Result Of A Tragic / Traumatic Event Which Involves The School

Incidents vary in complexity. These guidelines provide a framework for action and would not necessarily be followed in all cases. However the following 4 principles must be followed:

- Provision of clear accurate information
- Description of action to be followed
- Provision of help for all affected
- Maintenance of normal school program

1. Obtain accurate information. Deal only with substantiated facts.
2. As soon as possible inform Parish Priest and staff, especially those most directly involved. Inform close friends and family individually. Allow questions and discussion as they arise. Dispel rumours.
3. Appoint a skilled Support Team to assist in the management of the incident. The team may include staff members, counsellors, external CEM personnel, support agencies etc. The size and composition of the team will be related to the nature of the incident. Distribute names of Support Team members, and inform others of the role of the team.
4. As soon as possible provide information to the community as to what has happened, and what is being done.

5. The Parish Priest and/or Principal will deal with all media requirements. A written press release may be useful. If necessary, protect others from contact with the media. At all times liaise with Catholic Education Melbourne with regard to critical management issues.
6. Establish an open line of contact with the family or families directly involved.
7. Provide out of school hours contact if necessary.
8. Continue contact with the family to identify their expectations of the school, e.g. student participation in funeral or memorial service.
9. Try to identify those most likely to need help, e.g. classmates, teacher, special friends.
10. Ensure that counselling help is available. Counselling is available through our School Psychologist. Also support will be sought from Catholic Education Melbourne especially the Pastoral Care team.
11. Continue to keep staff, students and parents informed, especially about what has happened and what the school is doing about it.
12. As soon as possible call students together and provide information about what has happened and what the school is doing about it.
13. Provide counselling for all. Ensure that there are suitable places in which this can take place. Be prepared to modify the timetable and other arrangements so that people are free to make use of available help.
14. The class teacher may be the person to whom students first turn for help.
15. Children wishing to attend funerals should be encouraged to do so in the company of their parents. Provide meaningful participation for those not actually attending the service.
16. Continue normal routines at school but acknowledge the effect of tragedy on the school community. Be flexible with those in need of help. Be aware that many people may be deeply affected, e.g. an event may cause a person to recall some traumatic event involving them in the past. The anniversary may also be a difficult time.
17. Maintain links with the family. The school and family may wish to develop a memorial garden, erect a memorial plaque, or display a photo in a prominent position in the school.
18. Monitor, be sensitive to, and respond to staff and student's needs over a period of time.
19. Look after yourself.....take a break!
20. Ensure that the traumatic or critical incident is well documented.
21. Review this process after any significant incident.
22. At all times reference should be given to our Pastoral Care Policy.