



## CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

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### Rationale

Tragic or traumatic incidents do happen in school communities. A well-organised response plan can assist in the management of people's reaction and provide a means for those affected to begin the healing process.

### Focus

To assist those involved to cope with the initial trauma and to support them with their resultant response.

### Aims

- To provide an environment where there is stability and reassurance for the broader community.
- To minimize the trauma for all concerned.

### Implementation

#### Responding to a traumatic or critical incident in which the school is involved

- 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.

## Procedural Guidelines

- Obtain accurate information. Deal only with substantiated facts.
- Notify the Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic School as soon as possible
- Inform Parish Priest.
- Appoint a skilled Support Team to assist in the management of the incident. The team may include staff members, counsellors, external MACS 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.
- Inform Staff as soon as possible. This may involve a staff briefing or home phone call. Phone Tree will be implemented. Principal to contact Deputy Principal. Deputy Principal to contact Specialist Teachers. Principal to contact Level Leaders.
- Inform close friends and family individually. Allow questions and encourage discussion. Keep to the facts and dispel any rumours.
- As soon as possible, convey to the students appropriate information regarding the incident and inform them of what the school is doing about the situation.
- Appoint a support team to assist with the response to the situation.
- Assist staff to plan an appropriate response within the classroom.
- Assist students to express their feelings. ie memory table, poems, drawings
- Provide information to the general community as soon as possible ie letter to parents.
- Allow opportunities for those involved to participate in de-briefing sessions
- Ensure counselling is available should this be required.
- Set aside a recovery room.
- Keep in touch with those immediately involved and offer appropriate forms of support.
- Principal or Parish Priest to deal with media requirements. A written press release may be useful.
- Provide out of school hour contact if necessary. This may involve providing Principals' phone number or the situation may require maintaining telephone contact at the school.
- Continue normal routines at school but acknowledge the effect of the tragedy on the school community. Be flexible with those who may need help.

## In the event of a death

- Children wishing to attend funerals should be encouraged to do so in the company of their parents.
- Provide resources to allow Staff to participate in funerals.
- Provide meaningful participation for those not attending funeral.
- Keep in touch with family and respond to their wishes where practicable. Eg forming a guard of honour, assisting with the preparation of Liturgy
- Maintain links with the family. The school and family may wish to develop a memorial garden or implement some form of ongoing commemoration

## Assessment/Evaluation

- Biannually review implementation steps.
- Following a critical incident, review effectiveness of implementation steps and adjust where required.

## POLICY REVIEW

Policy reviewed	February 2025
Approved by	Principal Mark Basile
Next scheduled review date	February 2028