



ST. JOSEPH'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

Policy Document



Critical Incident Policy

COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

All students enrolled, and any child visiting, have the right to feel safe and be safe in all school environments and outside of school hours. The wellbeing of children in our care will always be our first priority and we have zero tolerance to child abuse. We aim to create a child safe and child friendly environment where children feel safe and are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for their safety.

BASIC BELIEFS

- "Never see a need without doing something about it"
- Everyone in our St. Joseph's community has the right to be safe.
- All children and staff have the right to proper care and support if required.
- That in the event of a crisis all school community members will follow the suggested protocol; people carrying out their responsibilities in a calm and professional manner.
- That each nominated person (ie; role in critical Incident) will be aware of their role and duties if there were an incident.
- That counselling should be provided to all those in need following an incident, this includes students, teachers and families of both directly and indirectly involved/witness to an incident.
- That it is essential that people be given clear, accurate information at all times.
- That we need to support people affected by the incident over a period of time, e.g. counselling.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To inform staff, especially those most directly involved, Parish Priest and School Board Chairperson, C.E.O. Consultant / Staff at Shepparton and Wangaratta Offices as soon as possible. Inform close friends and family individually.
- To implement our Critical Incident protocol in an efficient and professional manner.
- To be prepared i.e. protocol practice in the event of a crisis.
- To minimise disruption to the school.
- To provide counselling to those affected by the crisis.
- To maintain our school and surrounds and minimise any "key risks" that have the potential to destroy and/or interrupt essential functions or activities e.g. fire, explosion, bush fire, flood, storm, chemical/gas leak, etc.
- To give clear, accurate information at all times.
- Provide support to those affected by the critical incident.

ORGANISATION:

- 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.

ST. JOSEPH'S PRIMARY SCHOOL – Policy No:

- 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.

DEFINITION OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT

A Critical Incident or traumatic event, can be described as an event or circumstance that causes normally stable and healthy people to experience strong emotional or psychological distress that can interfere with their ability to function either at the time of the event or post event. These incidents may be large scale affecting the whole community or on a smaller scale. These Critical Incidents have the potential to leave lasting effects on those involved. Some incidents may result from emergencies during holiday periods and need to have a quick response from the Principal/ Vic Principal and Leadership Team.

ACTION TO BE TAKEN AS A RESULT OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT

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:

1. Provision of clear accurate information.
 2. Description of action to be followed.
 3. Provision of help for all affected.
 4. Maintenance of normal school program.
- If there has been an accident on School grounds go to the scene as quickly as possible.
 - Make sure the Leadership Team, including the OHS Leader are informed and delegated responsibilities to assist either at the scene or in school.
 - Investigate the scene of the accident / event and fill in all relevant documentation. Take immediate cautions so that this accident / event has minimal chance or reoccurring. Remove any hazards when it is safe to do so.
 - Obtain accurate information. Deal only with substantiated facts.
 - If the incident involves staff / student/s Inform other staff, especially those most directly involved, Parish Priest and School Board Chairperson, C.E.O. Consultant / Staff at Shepparton and Wangaratta Offices as soon as possible. Inform close friends and family individually.
 - If the Incident were to take place during school holidays there needs to be a quick response from the Principal/ Vic Principal and Leadership Team.
 - Appoint a skilled Support Team to assist in the management of the incident. The team may include staff members, counsellors, C.E. O Pastoral Care 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.

ST. JOSEPH'S PRIMARY SCHOOL – Policy No:

- As soon as possible provide information to the community as to what has happened, and what is being done.
- The Principal and/or Vice Principal will deal with all media requirements. A written press release may be useful. If necessary, protect others from contact with the media.
- Establish an open line of contact with the family or families directly involved.
- Provide out of school hours contact if necessary. This could be as simple as circulating the Principal's telephone number. In more complex situations it may mean maintaining telephone contact at the school.
- Continue contact with the family to identify their expectations of the school, e.g. student participation in funeral or memorial service.
- Try to identify those most likely to need help, e.g. classmates, teacher, special friends.
- Contact the Catholic Education Office Consultant in Wangaratta. All emergency or criminal activity, in which the safety or well-being of staff or students is at risk, or where there is a threat to property, must be reported immediately to the Catholic Education Office in Wangaratta. **Ph: (03) 57 230 000, Shepparton 03 58313811**
- Continue to keep staff, students and parents informed especially about what has happened and what process the school is taking.
- As soon as possible call students together and provide information about what has happened and what the school is doing about it.
- 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.
- The class teacher may be the person to whom students first turn for help. Make sure that he/ she is supported in this role.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Monitor, be sensitive to, and respond to staff and student's needs over a period of time.
- Review this process after any significant incident.

RESOURCES

- CEO Bendigo
- CEO Shepparton
- Local Emergency Services

BUDGETING

The staff of St. Joseph's Primary School will be provided with yearly updated training.
CRT's will be employed when necessary.

Policy No.:
Policy Name: Critical Incident Policy

Date Ratified: July 2020
Date for Review: July 2023

ST. JOSEPH'S PRIMARY SCHOOL – Policy No:

Associated costs will be met by the school.

