

# OAKLEIGH SOUTH PRIMARY SCHOOL CRITICAL INCIDENT PLAN POLICY AND PROCEDURES

## **PURPOSE:**

Occasionally schools will face a crisis situation that affects the school and community. These are called 'Critical Incidents'. At any time of the day a critical incident may occur at the school, creating a situation where staff, students and parents feel strong emotions (unsafe, vulnerable and under stress) which have the potential to overwhelm their ability to cope, either then or later. The following are examples of incidents, which may necessitate the implementation of a Critical Incident Management Plan. The plan moves through seven phases.

## **PHASE 1 – IDENTIFICATION (Examples)**

- The sudden death of a student or a staff member.
- The suicide of a student or a staff member.
- The murder of a student or a staff member.
- Groups of students and/or staff who witness sudden death, severe injury or disaster on school premises or whilst travelling to or from school on an excursion.
- Significant vandalism of school property.
- The terminal illness of a member of the school community.
- Natural or community disaster.
- Unusual and/or unfavourable media attention.
- Major disaster in an International Student's homeland
- Bushfire

The early identification of a potential/actual critical incident will help in creating a situation where the grieving process can begin, where students, staff and parents can talk about the situation in terms of readjustment and acceptance. If a critical incident is not addressed adequately, a significant amount of unresolved grief can develop within the individual regardless of his/her age. Unresolved grief can lead to severe emotional difficulties, physical illness and contribute to a crisis later in life.

## **CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM**

The Critical Incident Management Team consists of the following:

- Principal
- Assistant Principals
- Leadership Team members

It is the task of this team to assess the needs of the school in relation to possible incidents, to put in place procedures as a response to incidents and to educate the rest of the school on these. If training in critical incident management is available the team members will be provided with this training.

## **PHASE 2 – CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT**

Within 24 hours following the incident, the following checklist is to be followed: (This phase deals with the initial impact through to the area of post-incident. It is essential that these steps are discussed and amended so as to provide the maximum management. These actions will occur simultaneously, with the exact order depending on the nature of the incident).

- Obtain factual Information – e.g. police/family/those involved
- Leadership Team meet
- Activate Critical Incident Management Team
- Full staff meeting to inform all staff
- Office staff to be given a written statement and telephone lines to provide one line for incoming calls and one line for outgoing calls.
- Identify “at risk” students, staff and parents. Refer them to the Principal, Assistant Principal, Counselling Team
- Make contact with the families of those at risk. Inform them of counselling facilities and the school’s support.
- Students will be informed in class groups, at the same time. Teachers will be given a written statement to ensure consistent information. Information will include:
  - the facts
  - the school’s response – changes to normal timetable
  - meeting venues
  - counselling facilities that will be available
  - any other arrangements
- Rolls to be checked for absentees, to ensure all children are notified;
- Absent students and staff members will be informed by the Principal or Assistant Principal
- Parents will be informed via Compass of:
  - the facts
  - the school’s response
  - facilities available to parents
- The Department of Education and Training (DET) will be informed through the Emergency and Security Management Unit (03) 9589 6266
- All statements and contact with the media MUST be directed through the School Council President, the Principal and/or the DET Media Unit.
- NO staff member is to speak to the media.
- Allow discussion of the incident in the regular classroom

- Make provision for facilities for small group counselling and individual counselling
- Staff to meet and be debriefed DAILY

### **PHASE 3 – SIGNIFICANT CONTACT PERSONS ORGANISATION**

- DET through Emergency and Security Management Unit 9589 6266
- Emergency Services – Police/Ambulance/Fire 000
- Monash Hospital (03) 9594 2159
- School Council President (See the school office for details)
- State Emergency Service 132500
- Poisons Information Centre 131126
- WorkSafe Victoria 8792 9000

### **PHASE 4 – COUNSELLING TEAM**

Throughout the six phases, students, staff and parents will have varying responses to the situation and consequently will require ongoing support both at school and at home.

Phase 4 deals with the establishment of a counselling/intervention team. It is essential this team be appropriate to the 'Critical Incident'. If a death, sudden, suicide or accidental occurs, a team will need to provide counselling for those members of the school community who are deemed to be at risk. The team may include:

- School Welfare Officer
- School First Aid Coordinator
- Additional regional guidance officers and social workers (SSSO Team)
- The counselling team may be required for an intensive week, then for follow up over the following weeks, months or term. Long-term intervention will require referral of the individual to an appropriate outside agency. Areas designated as a focal point for the counselling team:
  - Conference Room
  - Assistant Principal's office
  - Other spaces designated by the Principal if needed

The counselling team will meet daily with the School Leadership Team to provide continuous evaluation and student/staff status. A final report from the team will be submitted to the School Leadership Team.

### **PHASE 5 – RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF STAFF AND STUDENTS**

At this point it is desirable to re-establish a sense of normality within the school. Although there has been a significant 'Critical Incident', students, staff and parents will feel safe once the regular patterns of management have been re-established: The following are steps in re-establishing boundaries:

- Rules that were relaxed revert to being enforced.

- School bell return to normal.
- Regular classes and activities take place.
- Homework is as usual.
- Logical consequences are given for inappropriate actions.
- School routines, staff meetings, social functions are re-established.
- Newsletters carry positive aspects of school activities.

#### **PHASE 6 – DEBRIEFING – PARENTS AND STAFF**

After re-establishing boundaries for students and staff, it is essential that parents and staff be formally debriefed, bringing closure to the 'Critical Incident'. Debriefing takes the following format:

- Formal meeting with professional input given by an appropriately qualified presenter, e.g. Counsellor.
- Question time to address any unanswered questions that parents or staff may have.
- Two sessions to be held – one for staff, one for parents.
- Each session to provide the opportunity for those in attendance to seek additional information, join a support group, or express concerns.
- Organise a ritual of closure as normal procedures are re-established. For staff this could be a morning tea and for students it may be an assembly.
- Debriefing procedures should be carried out within three weeks of the implementation of the Critical Incident Management Plan.

#### **PHASE 7 – CRITICAL INCIDENT REVIEW**

The Critical Incident Management Team, in consultation with any other relevant personnel, will review the management of the critical incident and make any indicated adjustments to the plan.

#### **RESOURCES AND LINKS**

##### **School Policy and Advisory Guide:**

[Emergency Management Planning](#)  
[Emergency and Critical Incident](#)

##### **Related Policies:**

Duty of Care Policy and Procedures

**EVALUATION:** Evaluation of the Plans will follow any critical incident at the school.

**This policy was reviewed and updated on August 18<sup>th</sup> 2019.**