

St Mary's Catholic Primary School is a school which operates with the consent of the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne and is owned, operated and governed by Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS), where formation and education are based on the principles of Catholic doctrine, and where the teachers are outstanding in true doctrine and uprightness of life.

Rationale

At St Mary's, the establishment of an effective Critical Incident Management Plan is an essential element of our Student Wellbeing Policy. The school staff has an integral role to play in supporting those in need at the time of the critical incident and should in turn receive support, in order to carry out their duties and for their wellbeing.

A critical incident is broadly defined as an event which causes disruption to an organisation, creates significant danger or risk and which creates a situation where staff, students and parents feel unsafe and under stress.

Aims

- To ensure that St Mary's provides a safe, secure, supportive and stimulating environment that is responsive to the social, emotional and learning needs of all members of the school community.
- To ensure there are clear guidelines for all staff in the event of a critical incident.

Responding to 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.

Implementation

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 a normal school program.
 1. Obtain accurate information. Deal only with substantiated facts.
 2. As soon as possible inform staff, especially those most directly involved, the Parish Priest and the School Advisory Board Chairperson. 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, a psychologist or counsellor, external Catholic Education Melbourne personnel, support agencies etc. The size and composition of the team will be related to the nature of the incident. Distribute names of the 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 principal will deal with all media requirements with CEM support when required. A written press release can be useful to protect others from the media.
 6. Establish an open line of contact with the family or families directly involved.

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's four year review cycle.

Ratification

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's cycle of review. (2020)