

# Dorset Primary School No.5132 CRITICAL INCIDENT PROTOCOL

## **Section 1: Responding to Critical Incidents**

Dorset will respond to all incidents according to the procedure and guidelines identified in the Department of Education (DET) School Incident Management System (SIMS). A critical incident is defined by the Department as:

- Incidents that impact or risk impacting on the health, safety and wellbeing of students or staff
- Incidents that impact on the continuity of school operations, including property damage and emergencies,
- Incidents that involve matters of serious conduct. (Source: DET, 2016)

In responding to any incidents, the Principal or Assistant Principals will report to the DET in a timely manner. Dorset will follow a protocol when reporting incidents.

### **Responding to Insignificant Events:**

Events that pose insignificant risk to staff/student welfare or school operations and are not in breach of the law will be dealt with by Dorset staff. These incidents may be reported to the DET. Minor events can include minor injuries which do not require first aid or minor incidents which do not affect the operations of the school.

### **Responding to Other Events:**

Events which pose minor, moderate or severe risk to staff/student welfare or school operations and may be in breach of the law will be dealt with by Dorset leadership staff (Principal and Assistant Principals). Minor or moderate incidents may include events where first aid is required, police are notified or if multiple staff are involved. Severe incidents may include events where school operations cease, immediate police intervention is required or where disability or extreme injury is acquired.

In incidents which pose moderate to severe risk to staff, students or school operations, the following procedure will apply:

#### **1) Ensure Safety: All staff**

- 1.1. Assess the safety of the situation
- 1.2. Remove the students and staff from any source of danger
- 1.3. Administer first aid and/or seek medical attention
- 1.4. If necessary, Principal will contact 000 and enact emergency management plan (see Appendix)
- 1.5. If a staff member or another student is accused or suspected of harming a student, separate them from immediate contact with the alleged victim
- 1.6. Provide support to any student or staff witnesses.

#### **2. Record Evidence: Principal/ Assistant Principal**

- 2.1. Keep and make a record of any physical or documentary evidence
- 2.2. If multiple students have witnessed the incident, separate them to preserve the integrity of their evidence until they are interviewed
- 2.3. In cases of alleged child abuse, follow instructions on evidence preservation from Victoria Police.

#### **3. Contact relevant parties: Principal/ Assistant Principal**

- 3.1. In cases of alleged child abuse or student sexual offending, request guidance from Department of Health and Human Services Child Protection or Victoria Police about what information can be shared
- 3.2. Contact parents/carers to provide them with information regarding the incident
- 3.3. Contact Worksafe for notifiable incidents.

#### **4. Report for Support: Principal/ Assistant Principal**

- 4.1. Reported incidents will be lodged as an Incident Reporting Information System (IRIS) alert by the Incident Support and Operations Centre (ISOC) for coordination of Area-based support to the school.

## **Section 2: Incident Management**

Dorset PS 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. It is essential that a Critical Incident Recovery Team be formed to manage the short and long term effects.

### **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.

#### **1. Provide clear, accurate information**

- 1.1. Obtain accurate information. Deal only with substantiated facts. This will be the responsibility of the Principal or the Assistant Principals.
- 1.2. Establish an open line of contact with the family or families directly involved. Provide out of school hours contact if necessary.
- 1.3. Notify staff and allow for discussion to dispel rumours.
- 1.4. Notify students and school community

#### **2. Describe the actions to be followed**

- 2.1. Principal will appoint a Critical Incident Recovery Team (CIRT) to assist in the management of the incident. The team may include staff members, psychologists, counsellors, external DET personnel, support agencies etc. The size and composition of the team will be related to the nature of the incident. Identify CIRT members, and inform others of the role of the team.
- 2.2. Appoint a CIRT member to respond to media enquiries. A written press release may be useful. If necessary, protect others from contact with the media. Advice regarding this may be obtained from the DET Emergency Communications Centre and the DET Media Unit.

#### **3. Provide help for all affected**

- 3.1. Identify those most likely to need help, e.g. classmates, teacher, special friends. Some students not directly affected may become distressed.
- 3.2. Ensure that counselling help is available. Contact the Regional Office and/or DET if necessary. 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 Department's 24 hour Emergency and Security Management Branch on (03) 9589 6266.
- 3.3. Provide counselling and chaplaincy services for all affected students, staff and community members.
- 3.4. Continue contact with the family to identify their expectations of the school, e.g. student participation in funeral or memorial service.

#### **4. Maintain a normal school program as close as possible**

- 4.1. Continue to keep staff, students and parents informed, especially about what has happened and what the school is doing about it.
- 4.2. 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.
- 4.3. 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.
- 4.4. Be sensitive to staff and student's needs over a period of time.

#### **5. Evaluation**

- 5.1. Evaluation of the Plans will follow any critical incident at the school.

Appendices which are connected with this policy are:

1. Appendix A: Emergency Management Plan
2. Appendix B: Critical Incident Recovery Plan
3. Appendix C: Emergency Record Form (Template)
4. Appendix D: Emergency Procedure
5. Appendix E: SIMS guidelines

## Appendix A

### Critical Incident Recovery Plan (CIRP)

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#### Responsibilities and Procedures

##### PLAN STATEMENT

This Plan is an integral part of the Emergency Management processes of the school.

##### IMPLEMENTATION

The Recovery Team will coordinate and implement the Plan (refer to **4.3** for the composition of the team).

##### SIMS procedure:

- Ensure safety
- Record evidence
- Contact relevant parties
- Report for Support

##### School procedure:

- Contact Department
- Brief staff
- Brief students and families
- Provide ongoing support for affected parties

##### DEBRIEFING

###### Critical Incident Stress Debriefing has three components:

1. Initial discussion about feelings and an assessment of the intensity of the stress responses
2. Detailed discussion of signs and symptoms of stress responses
3. Closing stage - provides overview and information with referral to an outside agency if required

The Recovery Team will assist the Principal to facilitate the recovery of staff and students and those of the School community affected by the critical incident.

The debriefing meeting of the Recovery Team should include a mental health professional and one peer who were not involved in the incident.

The Recovery Team will decide the structure and composition of debriefing meetings; such meetings should be held within **eight hours** of the critical incident. These meetings will review the impressions and reactions of the persons involved during or following the incident.

Counselling support and referrals for students and their families will be provided initially by the Principal or their nominee and a Regional Guidance Officer.

##### REVIEW

The Recovery Team will meet to review the implementation of the Critical Incident Recovery Plan within **seventy two (72) hours** of the critical incident. As part of the Critical Incident Recovery Plan, the Principal will set up a Recovery Team at the beginning of each year. Following a critical incident, the Principal will convene the Recovery Team as soon as possible.

##### The composition of the Recovery Team will be:

- Principal
- Assistant Principal
- Member of the teaching staff
- Member of the Educational Support staff (first aid trained)
- Other support staff as appropriate
- As necessary, psychologists, counsellors and DET personnel.

The Principal will convene the Recovery Team once each semester to review planning and strategies for the Critical Incident Recovery Plan.

##### EVALUATION

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

## Appendix B: Critical or Traumatic Incident Plan – First 24 hour Short Term Tasks Checklist

### Emergency Record

#### Record Information

- Nature of the incident
- Location of the incident, number and names of persons involved
- Name of the person reporting the incident:
- Time incident reported:
- Contact telephone number if away from school:

#### Verify all Details

- confirm that the information given about the event is accurate

#### Record the Incident

- notify principal workplace coordinator
- ensure emergency services have been called notify the Department's 24 hour Emergency Communications Centre on **(03) 9589 6266**

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### Ensure students and staff are safe from harm or injury

- Student Managers and YL Coordinators cordon off any 'crisis' area and keep students
- Manage the grounds while staff are briefed and ensure media do not intrude
- Check corridors, toilets etc for students - prevent students leaving on their own particularly if distressed
- Send all very stressed students to the Recovery area in the LRC
- Ensure that students do not make hysterical calls out of school
- Ensure the school continues as normally as possible

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### Establish Critical Incident Recovery Team

Role	Name (Write below)	First Aid: Y/N
Principal		
Assistant Principal		
Teacher		
ES Staff Member		
Other support staff as appropriate		
Any psychologists, counsellors and DET personnel. <b>(As necessary)</b>		

### Allocate responsibilities

Task	Person Responsible	Complete (tick)
Emergency message register		
Emergency contact list		
Evacuation and assembly of staff and students		
Cordon off area of 'crisis'		
Establish a Support Team and Communications Centre to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Manage information and phone calls</li> <li>▪ Coordinate media requests for information</li> <li>▪ Provide information to parents arriving at school</li> </ul>		
Coordinate routine school activities – maintain where practical		
Notify students, staff and ancillary about the emergency		
Notify parents first, and then siblings in the school		
Establish a recovery room/ supervisor for affected students		
Establish a waiting room for parents		
Inform students		

Inform School Council		
Inform School Community by FlexiBuzz		
Monitor School Community's reactions		
Liaise with outside agencies and emergency services		
Brief key personnel and review responses		

## **Recovery Room(s)**

### *Set Up Recovery Room*

- set up LRC, and if necessary the Staffroom
- empty adjoining rooms if possible and relocate to other rooms
- screen windows
- have available pens, textas, paper, scissors, envelopes, tissues

### *Appoint Recovery Room Supervisors*

- First Aid staff

### *Recovery Room Supervisors' Responsibilities*

- keep calm
- monitor students for shock reactions, provide first aid if necessary
- encourage students to gather in small friendship groups rather than bigger ones
- keep a list of students attending the recovery room
- give the students a task to undertake such as making a card or writing a letter
- contact parents of students who remain in the recovery room and alert them to possible concerns

### **Informing Staff- Principal/ Assistant Principal**

- Briefly outline teachers and ancillary staff about the incident, restate to confirm staff are aware
- Outline recovery management arrangements
- Discuss procedures to be followed by staff during the day, including protocols for informing students
- Discuss the general procedures that Critical Incident Team will be following
- Give staff time to discuss this among themselves
- Provide a brief factual outline to others in the community on a need to know basis
- Notify staff as soon as possible about an incident involving death/ serious injury which occurs outside standard school hours
- Notify staff as soon as possible of a whole-staff briefing before informing students at start of the next school day
- Review with staff afterwards any issues and needs
- Provide staff with contact numbers for counselling or support services for themselves

### **Informing Students- Principal/ Assistant Principal**

- Contact the bereaved family or police to ascertain what information may be released within the school
- Prepare a written factual statement, without graphic detail, for use as a reference by teachers when discussing the incident with students
- Determine appropriate opportunity to inform students, i.e. assembly.
- Discuss with teachers who feel uncomfortable raising the event with students and arrange for support from another teacher or a member of the recovery team
- Identify staff who may be too distraught to take classes and arrange replacements
- Inform students soon after briefing staff
- Ask teachers to mark a roll to identify who has been informed and who has not

### **Teachers**

- Provide a factual account of the incident at the beginning of the first class in a way that ensures all students hear consistent information.
- Limit speculation and rumours
- Inform students about arrangements of counselling and recovery rooms
- Inform students about arrangements for services, and appropriate ways to express condolences
- Outline the arrangements for the day

### **Notifying close friends- Principal/ Assistant Principal**

- Notify close friends especially girlfriends and boyfriends prior to making an announcement to other students
- Take these students aside when they arrive at school and inform them privately
- Consider contacting their parents
- Prior to the start of the day, ensure individual attention is given to intimate friends who are likely to have special needs beyond those of other students

## **Communication Centre**

*Organise the following to be on hand:*

- telephone - dedicated line in case of jamming by incoming calls
- telephone message if necessary
- message records
- phone lists
- rolls
- excursion list
- timetable
- maps
- computer and printer
- photocopier
- Displan instructions

## **Media Coverage**

- nominate a media coordinator, prepare the School Council President and Principal to provide on camera interviews
- contact DET Media Unit on 9637 2871 or 9264 5821
- prepare a three paragraph report:
  - briefly outline the facts
  - outline what the school has done to assist those affected
  - outline support and recovery arrangements
  - include a name and contact number for the school media coordinator
- liaise with the family about any statements made to media
- exclude discussion of policy matters, limit comment to the emergency and the school response
- set rules for persistent media
- keep a record of media enquiries
- offer scheduled interviews in return for media commitment not to seek uninvited access to staff, students, parents
- negotiate accepted areas for filming e.g. school/church boundary and not within
- check that information provided does not conflict with court requirements or police proceedings
- anticipate renewed interest arising from anniversaries, court proceedings

## **Long Term Actions**

- monitor and support members of the school community, particularly on significant dates such as anniversaries
- consider longer term intervention activities such as counselling or specialist support
- consider establishing an area within the school as a place of remembrance
- reconvene key people at regular intervals to review the school response and effectiveness of planning arrangements
- review the school emergency management plan in light of experience gained
- consider a ritual of marking significant dates
- prepare for legal proceedings if necessary
- remove students name from the roll if deceased
- consider article in school magazine

**Appendix C: Emergency Record Form – Template**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Time of notification: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of person taking the call \_\_\_\_\_  
Position: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of person reporting the incident \_\_\_\_\_  
Contact telephone number \_\_\_\_\_

**Details**

**Describe:**

Where everyone is now  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What action is being taken to help?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Who: \_\_\_\_\_  
When: \_\_\_\_\_  
Where: \_\_\_\_\_  
How: \_\_\_\_\_  
Nature and extent of injury: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Immediate Actions Required**

Principal notified?	<b>9725 5038</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Time:
Other school staff?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Time:
Emergency Services notified?	<b>132 500</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Time:
Emergency & Security Management notified?	<b>9589 6266</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Time:

**Emergency Contact Telephone Numbers**

POLICE		000
AMBULANCE		000
FIRE BRIGADE		000
STATE EMERGENCY SERVICES (SES)		132 500
LOCAL HOSPITAL	Maroondah	1300 342 255
EMERGENCY SECURITY MANAGEMENT		(03) 9589 6266
ASSISTANT REGIONAL DIRECTOR		8392 9300

**Emergency Message Record Form**

Time: \_\_\_\_\_ : am/pm  
Message from \_\_\_\_\_  
Action required? Yes  No   
If 'YES', please detail:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Completed   
Message taken by \_\_\_\_\_

**Emergency Message Record**

Time: \_\_\_\_\_ : am/pm  
Message from \_\_\_\_\_  
Action required? Yes  No   
If 'YES', please detail:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Completed   
Message taken by \_\_\_\_\_

