



# St Brigid's School

## Policy and Procedure Document

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# EMERGENCY AND CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

This document contains the policies outlining planned responses to deal with various critical incidents that may occur within the school.

These policies are:

## 1. Crisis Management Policy & Procedures

Outlines our planned responses to crises that may affect individuals in the community and/or the life of the school community.

## 2. Critical Incident Management Procedures




Outlines our planned responses to events or incidents that require either

a. Fire or Emergency Evacuation

b. A Lock-down response.






This policy recognises that the St Brigid's School and Preschool community may from time to time be faced with a crisis which may affect individuals in the community and/or the life of the school community. This policy provides a clear framework for effectively managing a range of crises in the community.

## 1. Underlying assumptions and rationale

-  The community is characterised by both diversity and interconnectedness, so that the lives of individuals affect the community as a whole.
-  The gospel values which invite us to welcome and care for all people, especially the most vulnerable, and to practise justice and service, call us to respond to crises in the school community with well-planned guidelines which are respectful of all involved.
-  St Brigid's School seeks to provide an environment which provides physical, spiritual and emotional security at all times, and especially in times of crisis and need.

## 2. Purpose













Through application of this policy, St Brigid's School and Preschool aims to:

-  Respond to any death/tragedy/crisis in an informed and supportive manner which respects the requests of family/ies involved.
-  Respond to situations of extreme danger in the school and preschool or where the safety of those in the school and preschool is severely threatened.
-  Provide support to other members of the school and preschool community who are affected, liaising with agencies or individuals from the wider community where appropriate.
-  Maintain the healthy functioning of school and preschool as far as possible.
-  Clarify the responsibilities of those dealing with crisis so they can respond in a spirit of cooperation and collaboration approach for the management for purposes of emergencies and critical incidents.

## 3. Definitions





Critical Incidents occur when a person experiences or witnesses a sudden traumatic stressor which has the potential to harm life or well-being. This sudden unexpected event may be violent and shocking. Such events can challenge our ability to cope and sense of security.

*Examples:*





-  Major injury
-  Serious traffic crash/accident
-  Death – accidental or following an illness
-  Suicide
-  Abduction
-  Intruder on school/preschool grounds
-  Bomb threat
-  Sexual assault
-  Terminal illness – staff or student
-  Fire at school/preschool
-  Hazardous substance spill or explosion
-  Natural disaster bushfire, earthquake, flood

# CRISIS IMPACT

Reactions may be immediate or may be delayed. They may be:

-  physical
-  behavioural
-  emotional
-  cognitive

In addition;

-  Each person is unique
-  Each loss/crisis is unique
-  Each person's path to recovery will reflect that uniqueness
-  In any group there will be many different paths to recovery.

## St Brigid's school response

Each situation will be unique and will require responses which are modified to fit the school/preschool and the gravity of the situation.

During a Type A Critical Incident (defined below), emergency services assume responsibility for the management of the situation.

Under emergency services direction the Principal retains responsibility for the students, staff and the school. Principals have the long-term responsibility for the school and the follow-up needed.

## School crisis definitions

### Type A: Critical Incident

A major event that closes school/preschool functioning and required intervention from community services eg. police, fire brigade, ambulance, State Emergency Services.

During the immediate management of the incident the Principal in partnership with the leadership team takes direction from the emergency service personnel, however retains the long term responsibility for the school and the required follow up.

These incidents may include: natural disasters (bush fires, earthquakes, floods); industrial accidents (chemical spills, explosions); siege; major school fire.

## **Type B: School Crisis**

An event or series of events of sufficient gravity to impact on significant numbers of the school community and requires intervention by Teacher and Student Support Services.

The school may not close, however the impact will be such that the normal functioning of the school is not possible. The Principal, in partnership with the leadership team, retains control and responsibility for the school and requests assistance for school support.

These incidents may include accidents at school or on excursions; fire; death; suicide; violent incidents; bomb threats; school explosions; abduction; rape; vandalism; terminal illness; severe conflict; school/preschool amalgamations and closures.

## **Type C: Traumatic Event**

An event which produces strong emotional reactions and affects the functioning of individuals and small groups of people within the school/preschool community however does not interfere with the normal functioning of the school.

The Principal, in partnership with the leadership team, will facilitate access to appropriate support for those affected.












These incidents may include: classroom accidents, death of family members (student/staff), violent incidents, chronic illness, conflict (staff/student/parent or caregiver).

A series of significant traumatic events may in some circumstances develop into a school/preschool crisis.

## 1. Implementation of St Brigid's school management plan

The Principal, in partnership with the leadership team, must first determine the type of incident which has occurred i.e. Type A, B or C. Once this has been established:

The Principal (or person nominated by the Principal) will undertake a series of actions, depending on the type of incident, including:






-  Set up a Crisis Management Team and convene a meeting immediately with St Brigid's School administration team and support personnel.
-  Contact the school/preschool's Principal Consultant who will inform the appropriate personnel (e.g. social workers, WH&S Adviser).
-  If Type A emergency, clarify with the emergency service personnel where the communications centre will be established and nominate a senior staff member to be the communication liaison (the Principal will be required to attend to numerous matters and need to have access to relevant details).
-  Ensure all students and staff are accounted for.
-  Determine whether additional support is needed:
  -  Education (e.g. relief teachers, ancillary support)
  -  Community support and human service agencies.
-  The decision to cease emergency procedures rests with the emergency services personnel, in consultation with the worksite managers and health and safety representatives
-  Important Note: only police or doctors can release any information about fatalities.
-  All media is to go through Principal's Consultant.
-  Contact St Brigid's School Board chairperson.

## 2. Crisis management procedures










### Action Plan






The Principal, will appoint a CRISIS MANAGEMENT TEAM appropriate to the situation. When the school is notified of a death/tragedy, the crisis management team should meet as soon as possible.

## Purpose of the meeting

-  To ascertain the facts relating to the tragedy. Ensure that family/ies requests are respected.
-  To allocate duties to each team member over the next few days.
-  To consider the role and level of involvement of school resources.
-  To plan, if appropriate, home visit/s to the family/ies affected by the tragedy.
-  To plan communication to staff, students, parents & media.

## General Guidelines

-  Information to the school community and the media should be precise and the responsibility of one team member only.
-  There should be regular updates of information to combat rumours.
-  Staff meetings should be held before each school day to keep all staff informed. Written updates may be helpful especially for part-time staff.
-  Two teachers need to be allocated to the class groups most affected. Allow open discussion of the tragedy and enlist the help of counsellors if necessary.
-  Special care needs to be taken to identify siblings, close friends and relatives in the school.
-  Set up recovery rooms for students and staff groups.
-  The level of school involvement should be determined by the team member/s assigned to the home visit/s.
-  External agencies need to be contacted for support and counselling; e.g. Principal Consultant at the Catholic Education Office, Parish Priest, School Chaplain, Centacare, other schools, etc.
-  Parents should be informed in writing of the precise nature of the event and be given clear and accurate details with respect to the wishes of the family.






-  One person needs to be appointed as spokesperson for the media. Contact with the Catholic Education Office for direction is required.
-  Get the school back to functioning as soon as possible.
-  Give attention to spiritual as well as to emotional needs, e.g., prayer, memorial service, etc.
-  Be aware that there may be a ripple effect for staff, students and families because a tragedy may trigger unresolved grief relating to previous loss.
-  After the tragedy, a record of the event needs to be documented and kept. A record of staff and student responses and needs is also required to be kept.

### 3. Communication

Communication is important during a critical incident. The following communications shall be undertaken.



#### 3.1 STAFF

The Principal, in partnership with the leadership team, shall:

-  Provide facts regarding the incident, if possible at a staff meeting.
-  Outline the management plan.
-  Suggest sources of personal support for school/ staff – Centacare to be approved by Principal Consultant. (1300 667700)
-  Ensure staff, who may be absent, are informed (e.g. part-time, outside agency staff who may be involved in school projects).
-  Offer Access programme (EAP)


#### 3.2 INFORM ALL STUDENTS

The Principal (or person nominated by the Principal) shall:






-  Assemble students and outline the facts of the incident at the earliest opportunity.
-  Provide information to students regarding who they can approach for support with Centacare.

#### 3.3 INFORM PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

The Principal (or person nominated by the Principal) shall:


-  Make contact by telephone or visit parents/caregivers of any students directly affected (especially where a death has occurred). Inform all school volunteers.



-  Principal's Consultant and Catholic Education Office will help write letters and provide assistance with the setup of support.
-  Provide the facts of the incident.
-  Outline the school immediate response.
-  Indicate possible reactions children and adolescents may experience.
-  Suggest sources of help for families.






### 3.4 SET UP A RECOVERY ROOM IN THE SCHOOL











The Principal (or person nominated by the Principal) shall:

-  Provide, wherever possible, support personnel, refreshments, comfortable chairs (Staff Room).

## 4. Critical incident procedure




In the event of a critical incident, whether it be a Type A, B or C, St Brigid's School will take the following action.

-  Work from the Critical Incident procedures
-  Ask for assistance. There are Catholic Education Office Staff who are willing to assist in a variety of ways. These services should be called upon and include:
  - a) recovery planning
  - b) emotional support
  - c) legal issues
  - d) assessing needs of staff/students
  - e) advocacy with other agencies
  - f) extra staffing.
  - g)
-  Refer media enquiries to the Catholic Education Office Director who is the official media spokesperson for Catholic Schools or the Principal or Senior Staff as school media spokespersons. Minimise media contact with staff, students and parents/caregivers.
-  Gather accurate information about the incident to disseminate to Staff, Students, Families, School Board Chairperson, Parish Priest and the school community.
-  Establish a Crisis Management Team: Principal, Deputy Principal/APRIM Senior Staff, Parish Priest, Administration Officer, Bursar.

-  How the information is passed on, how much, and to whom, depends on the nature of the crisis.
  
-  Fact is better than rumour. Therefore, ensure that any person who is disseminating information has the correct information.
  
-  Confidentiality of those involved needs to be respected in particular crisis. Families appreciate knowing what the school/preschool has done and plans to do to ensure the safety of the students. The Principal, in partnership with the leadership team shall:
  -  Inform people of how they can get help from within the system and from outside agencies.
  
  -  'Rituals' can help if the people involved have faith in them and/or are involved in the planning.
  
  -  As soon as possible return to or maintain the usual school routine.
  
  -  Be flexible.
  
  -  Be aware of the probability of heightened reactions:
    - on the day of the crisis
    - on third day following (especially if a death)
    - one week later
    - one month later
    - three months later
    - one year later
    - other anniversary times, significant for your situation.
  
-  Ensure the Principal and Staff take care of themselves (nutrition, exercise, rest and talk).
  
-  Review & revise the Action Plan with a Crisis Response team.





## 6. Personal responses to critical incidents

It is important to note that everyone in the school Community (including the Principal):









-  Will be affected differently by the crisis situation.
  
-  May experience loss and grief reactions. These can be extremely strong and include feelings of despair, vulnerability, sadness, disbelief, shock and physical ill-health. The type and strength of reactions may surprise the individual and others. It is also possible for someone involved to exhibit no visible reaction at the time of the event and later experience delayed reactions.
  
-  Past losses and current life issues may increase a person's vulnerability to the current crisis, and this will need to be considered and respected.


## 7. A guide to responsibilities

### Responsibilities of student







-  To be aware of and take responsibility for their own behaviour in response to crises.
-  To respect and support the rights of other students, staff and themselves to continue to participate as
-  far as possible in the teaching and learning processes when there is a crisis.
-  To offer care and support for their peers in an appropriate manner, seeking help where necessary.

### Responsibilities of parents







-  To become actively involved, as primary role models and partners in the education process, in
-  discussion and decision making about school/preschool policy.
-  To encourage their child/ren to respect and support the rights of others and be sensitive to the needs of those affected by death/tragedy.
-  To inform the school/preschool of any crisis which is likely to affect their child/ren's life at school/preschool and/or impact upon others in the community.
-  To read all communication from the school/preschool so that they are informed of any crisis and can
-  respond to their child/ren's needs effectively.
-  To support the planned implementation of this policy and encourage its regular review.
-  Follow directives of the School Crisis Response Team and /or their delegated representatives.

-  Refrain from providing personal interpretation of events to the media and anyone else, except those conducting official investigations on the understanding that an official school representative will provide regular and precise information and updates.










### Responsibilities of staff



-  To ensure that they are accurately informed about any crisis, that they inform students accurately and combat rumours.
-  To offer support for students and families in their care.
-  To allow open discussion of the tragedy, working with counsellors if available.
-  To direct any media enquiries to the Appointed Representative.
-  To seek personal and/or professional help when needed to assist their response.
-  To support guidelines and procedures that promote the dignity and rights of other community members and promote the continuation, as far as possible, of teaching and learning processes when there is a crisis.

### Responsibilities of principal









-  To provide clear guidelines and procedures to staff and regular, relevant professional development in crisis management.
-  To ensure that values of justice, service and respect are modelled and supported in all crisis management procedures.
-  To communicate with families and media in a sensitive manner.
-  To ensure that the spiritual as well as emotional needs of the community are met and encourage those affected by a crisis to seek help.
-  To set up a crisis management team.
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### Responsibilities of crisis management team
















-  Members of the Crisis Management Team will each be allocated a task to manage.
-  Liaising with family (ies).
-  Identifying vulnerable students, staff and close friends for personal contact and follow up where appropriate (e.g. in case of suicide).
-  Preparing written information for students, staff and parents.
-  Liaising with mental health professionals.
-  Liaising with police and protecting student belongings.
-  Liaising with sector support staff.
-  Managing all incoming and outgoing information (including sympathy cards, newspaper notices, etc.).
-  Managing media contact.

-  Documenting all actions. Making appropriate environmental changes.
-  Meet daily for the first week following the event.





## Site Control

-  Assess site for further danger.
-  Advise what emergency services are required.
-  Give 'all clear' to first aid.
-  Contain the site.
-  Remove spectators from the area.
-  Record details of witnesses.
-  Control the site until professional assistance arrives
-  Provide details of statements from witnesses






## First Aid

-  Senior First Aid Officer to gather all available first aid equipment including blankets and a large supply of plastic gloves from First Aid Room.
-  Move to the scene and assess the situation.
-  Do not enter the site if it is still dangerous.
-  When clear, attend to injured as required.
-  Keep accurate log of treatments and injured parties.
-  Assist until professional assistance arrives.
-  Continue to assist if required.
-  Provide details of injured parties and injuries treated (as permitted by the privacy policy).
-  Emergency Services Call
-  Assess which emergency services are required by Fire Warden.
-  Be advised by site control.
-  Make necessary calls.
-  Further calls may be required to other services e.g. Gas, Electricity, Council, Water.
-  Monitor situation for response.
-  Supervise the telephone lines for official use.









## Media

-  Intercept all media (Principal or Delegate)
-  Act as official spokesperson.
-  Make necessary statements as required.
-  Write all media/communication releases. Check legalities with CESA staff..








## Communications

-  Contact local clergy when required (Principal or Delegate)
-  Contact parents of injured parties.
-  Meet with parents on arrival, direct them and maintain contact
-  Gather all data from site control, First Aid and other agencies.
-  Assist in formulation of internal communications – staff, students and parents.

## Follow Up Assistance

-  Post trauma debrief.
-  Liaise with CEO to ascertain if post trauma debrief is required.
-  Organise additional staff if required.
-  Organise counselling for students/staff/parents.
-  Maintain contact with injured parties.
-  Arrange visitations if required.
-  Support for families of injured.
-  Ensure communication updates.

## 8. Longer term considerations

-  Residual dangers
-  Legal matters
-  Insurance
-  Rehabilitation – counselling etc
-  Evaluation of response
-  Risk assessment
-  Further planning.

# Checklist for administrators after a critical incident affects St Brigid's school

## First 24 hours

### **Find out the facts**

Collect information about the incident from Reliable sources as soon as possible.

### **Establish a management plan**

Contact our School Performance Leader at the Catholic Education South Australia.(CESA)

Convene a meeting immediately with the Crisis Management Team and all support personnel.

Determine if additional support from helping Agencies is needed.

### **Inform all staff**

Provide the facts of the incident.

Outline the proposed management plan.

Suggest sources of personal support for Teachers.

Provision of professional assistance may be necessary.

### **Inform all students**

Organise visits to all classrooms to outline the facts of the incident at the earliest opportunity.

### **Set up a recovery room in the school**

Provide, where possible, tea/coffee,

Comfortable chairs and an appropriate support person.

Allow distressed students and staff access to this room for several days after the incident.

### **Liaise with the media**

Minimise media contact with staff and students.

All staff are to direct any media enquiries to the appointed Representative.

All media statements will be ratified by the Leadership Team after liaising with the CEO.

## In the longer term

### **Monitor staff for signs of stress**

Encourage stressed staff to seek professional help, accessed through ACCESS - Employee Assistance Program

Try to provide a supportive environment.

Provide for an increased demand on teacher relief time.

### Monitor other members of the school/preschool community for signs of stress

Grief related to past losses may be triggered by the crisis and current life issues will be felt strongly.






Encourage those affected to seek help support and/or professional help.

### Be alert for and sensitive to the disturbing influences of anniversaries, inquests and legal proceedings

Special support for those affected may be needed again at these times.

Make extra staff and services available, if necessary.

### Critical Incident Management depends on:

-  Personnel knowing their duties and carrying them out to the best of their ability.
-  Teamwork.
-  Accepting the leadership roles of those designated
-  Maintaining professionalism.
-  Genuine support for each other.

In the event of a critical incident:

**There is a grave risk of post-incident trauma which could endanger a staff member's capacity to function adequately or safely.**

Therefore

**No staff member should leave the workplace until after they have had an opportunity to discuss the situation.**

The debrief will normally occur in the staff room.







# Critical Incident Management Procedures

In the event of Extreme Danger or Threat:




## Action Plan

Whoever first detects the Danger or Threat will immediately notify the principal or person in charge who will authorise and implement evacuation or lock-down procedures as necessary.

The person in charge will delegate responsibilities for:

-  Sounding alarms.
-  Notifying all work areas via the page-all facility on the phone systems.
-  Contacting the police, CEO, and other agencies where necessary.
-  Contacting classes or groups who are off campus of the danger or threat and requesting them not to return to school until notified that it is safe to do so.




As soon as it is safe to do so:

-  The school will gather on the oval for a brief assembly to ensure everyone that
-  there is no danger.
-  Staff will reassure students of their safety and resume normal functioning as soon as possible.

As soon as possible after the event, the principal will convene the Crisis Management Team to evaluate the evacuation or lock-down procedure and record details of the event and evacuation or lock-down response.

In consultation with CESA, the Principal will organise appropriate information for families regarding the incident.

In the days following the event, the Crisis Management Team will:

-  Monitor staff and student well-being.
-  Arrange counselling where needed.
-  Provide information to CEO, Police and other agencies where needed.

# FIRE or EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

## Rationale








There are a number of circumstances when it may become necessary for the safety of our community to evacuate school buildings or premises. For example; fire, gas leak or bomb threat. In this circumstance the school will evacuate to Peter McKay Reserve on Le Hunt Street and walk through to the Gladstone Road side of the Reserve.

Fire or Emergency Evacuation Alarm Signal A continuous bell will ring until the emergency services arrive or until the bell is switched off when an announcement has been made to return to normal practice.

## Procedures

All teaching / non-teaching staff will are to take children out to the evacuation area.

The oval is the main evacuation area unless stated otherwise. Wardens will let you know if this changes.

-  Teachers are to vacate the room, take children immediately to oval, do not lock doors, do not grab hats, and do not panic.
-  All people without classes report to designated assembly area.
-  ESO' and other adults (including canteen staff, music tutors, parish staff and any parents) working with children, take children to assembly area.
-  When on the oval, students are to line up into two lines and teachers are to instruct students to sit down.
-  Teachers are to take roll and then wait for the Principal or designated leader in charge to validate that all children are present or accounted for.
-  If any child, staff member or visitor is not present or accounted for, designated wardens will need to undertake a search of all areas.
-  When all children / staff are accounted for and danger is no longer present, an announcement will be made to indicate that all are able to return to their work areas.

# Emergency lock-in Procedure

## Rationale

There are a number of circumstances when it may become necessary for the safety of our community to remain indoors, or to return to indoors quickly.
















## Procedures

There are 2 sets of Lock In procedures, one during class time and the other during break times.

## Lock In Alarm Signal

The siren will ring with continuous short blasts for the duration of 1 minute.

## During Class Time Response



-  All adults and students are to remain in the building they are currently located in.
-  Designated staff to check toilets
-  All external doors are to be locked.
-  All windows are to be closed and secured. Staff are to check adjoining rooms to ensure that doors and windows of these rooms are locked.
-  Lights to be turned off.
-  All adults and students are to be kept away from the windows and remain in the safest and most appropriate part of the room.
-  A roll call is to be taken and absentees noted. Additional people are to be recorded. Where possible account for the missing and any additional people are to be recorded.
-  Communication with the Office. The office staff will phone each class to ensure all students, staff and other personnel are accounted for. Please give details only about the number of people in the room, any known missing people
-  If you have a mobile phone with you, please turn it on but put it on silent.
-  The school landline phone number is 82623812
-  Under no circumstances should missing people be searched for outside the current building.
-  Do not open the door to any person unless they are recognised as accredited staff, eg, police or emergency services personnel.
-  People outside when the alarm rings should immediately go to the nearest secure building and inform the front office of your location in the school/preschool.
-  Students and Staff to go to the nearest building accessible to them.
-  Students and Staff to go to the nearest building. Staff members are to be accessible to the students.

## During Play Time Response

### Lock-In Alarm Signal

The siren will ring with continuous short blasts for the duration of 1 minute.  
An announcement will be made for students to move into the closest classroom.

Teachers on duty will direct students to the nearest building:

-  Playground/Oval: Candler
-  Courtyard: Classrooms

Staff members in the staffroom are to go to these areas to assist with supervision if the situation is deemed safe to do so.

If it is dangerous to evacuate to the designated building students will be directed to an alternate designated building and follow the above procedures.

### All Clear

The "all clear" to the Lock In procedure is announced over the loudspeaker

Responsibility for implementation, monitoring and review of the policy is vested at the level appropriate to the following roles:



*Shannon Correll*  
Principal



*Asmara Omar*  
School Board Chairperson

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