1. **DEFINITION**

A critical incident is any situation faced by members of the school community that causes them to experience strong emotional reactions which have the potential to interfere with their ability to function normally and therefore disrupts normal routine.

2. **RATIONALE**

St Patrick’s Primary School is located in the suburb of Swansea in Lake Macquarie. The school is situated on the lake at Black Ned’s Bay. The school draws its students from a wide range of socio economic households, from the very high to the low. Occasionally, it is vulnerable to the everyday risks and dangers associated with modern urban living. Some of these factors could precipitate critical incidents involving the school.

These grave situations have the potential to affect the emotional welfare of students, staff and community members, and can significantly impede the management of the school. Although we would hope such crises never occur, we must be prepared to respond effectively in a considered way. By doing so, we may be able to alleviate the stress and suffering that would accompany these critical events.

Our compassionate response to our students, staff and community’s needs should serve as a model for effective social action in our student’s future lives.

3. **AIMS**

This policy and its procedures, reflect the Diocesan Policy in seeking to achieve the following aims:

- To establish a Critical Incident Management Team as a vital element in planning to manage a critical incident
- To adequately assess hazards and situations which may require immediate action and analyse the requirements to address these hazards
- To establish liaison with all relevant emergency services
- To develop an effective management/action plan for each individual incident identified ensuring appropriate action and provision of support during and after the critical incident
- To disseminate planned procedures and organise practice drills to test the plans, as appropriate (e.g. fire evacuation).

4. **IMPLEMENTATION**

St Patrick’s, in line with Diocesan recommendations, has established a Critical Incident Management Team. The Principal is a member of the Team.

**Principal’s responsibilities**

- Be prepared to provide a response to the media.
- Determine the Local and State Government regulations and plans concerning disasters.
- Seek advice and help from services such as Police, Fire Brigade and State Emergency Services.
• Make contact with the nearest hospital and medical centre.
• Formulate debriefing and counselling procedures.
• Ensure that there is provision in the plan for dissemination of information to parents and family members.
• Inform the Catholic Schools Office.
• Provide access to support services for affected community members

Team responsibilities
• Ensure that staff and students are familiar with emergency warnings (e.g. sirens) and procedures.
• Develop evacuation plans – see evacuation and lockdown policy.
• Periodic evacuation and lockdown drills. (See evacuation and lockdown policy).
• Assignment of duties to school staff (emergency contact names and phone numbers updated at beginning of each school year).
• Providing regular opportunities (at least yearly) for all staff to be kept informed of Critical Incident Management Plans.
• Regularly review (at least yearly) and update management plans.

5. EVALUATION

The Critical Incident Policy will be evaluated and updated, if necessary, at a designated staff meeting each year or at the conclusion of the incident where the action plan was used.

6. BUDGET

Funds will be made available annually to maintain school intercom. Funding for repairs and counseling will be assessed and available as required.

PROCEDURES

1. EXAMPLES OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS THAT MIGHT OCCUR IN THE SCHOOL
• Destruction of whole or part of the school.
• Major vandalism.
• Students and/or teacher being taken hostage.
• Students witnessing serious injury.
• Unusual and unfavourable media attention.
• Sexual assault of a member of the school community where that assault has become public knowledge.
• A natural or other major disaster in the community.
• Students witnessing a death.
• Death of a student, staff member or parent/community member.
• Medical emergency.
2. **CRITICAL INCIDENT FLOW CHART**

*Identification of the Critical Incident*

*Implementation of appropriate steps – evacuation / lockdown / contact of emergency services, apply emergency care / CPR – Principal or in absence Assistant Principal*

*In the absence of the principal, contact CSO and other significant persons*

*Contact relevant staff and parents as per emergency contacts schedule*

*Debriefing and counselling services*

3. **EMERGENCY CONTACTS**

000: emergency services
49791200: Catholic Schools Office

**Emergency staff contact procedures**

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Principal

                      Assistant Principal  Parish Priest  CSO personnel
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  Teaching and non-teaching staff
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4. **PROCEDURES TO BE ADOPTED IN RESPONSE TO THE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE ‘HIV, HEPATITIS AND OTHER BLOOD BORNE INFECTIONS’ POLICY**

In response to the CSO ‘HIV, Hepatitis and Other Blood Borne Infections Policy’ the following procedures should take place:

a. St Patrick’s Primary School Swansea will review and, if necessary, revise practices in the total school environment for the safety of students, parents and teachers.

b. **Follow-up action:** The Principal or designated other:
   - Records facts of situation.
   - Informs CSO personnel.
   - Receives advice on debriefing / counseling.
   - Contacts and advise parents.
   - Informs parish priest.
c. **Additional action**
   - Contact local support personnel.
   - Convene full staff meeting of teaching and administration staff to:
     - present information.
     - allow staff response.
     - discuss action plan.
   - Set up recovery room in the school.
   - Identify ‘at risk’ students and staff.
   - Contact relatives of ‘at risk’ students and staff.
   - Inform students of facts of the incident.
   - Provide counseling services for students, staff and community.
   - Arrange debriefing for ‘at risk’ students and staff.
   - Allow students to discuss and response.
   - Inform all parents by letter indicating:
     - facts if the critical incident.
     - possible reaction of students.
     - school’s response plan.
     - source of help for families.
     - encourage open communication between home and school.

5. **SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS**
   a. **Media**
      - Principal is the only spokesperson.
      - Deny access to students.
      - Control access to premise.
   b. **Phone Enquires**
      - Principal is to only read prepared statement.
      - Register all calls.
      - Encourage emotionally distressed parents to come to the school.
      - Notify Principal of any distresses callers.
   c. **Death**
      - In the case of a staff death, all staff is to be notified and immediate support given. Relieve staff if necessary.
      - In the case of a student death, the Critical Incident Plan will be adhered to, with consideration given to the following:
        - Facts.
        - How much detail should be made public.
        - Siblings at school and their special needs.
        - Arrangements for the personal effects of the deceased student.
        - Sympathy and support for the family.
        - Memorial.
   d. **Parent/s and Community**
      - Volunteers must be briefed with a prepared statement as soon as possible.
      - Parents must feel able to stay at school in the designated room and should be assisted to be able to positively support their child and/or children.