



SERIOUS INCIDENTS POLICY

JUNE 2018

1. **PURPOSE**

This policy aims to set out a schoolwide approach in response to a serious incident, during the four phases of a serious incident:

- i. Preparation, mitigation and training
- ii. Immediate response
- iii. Post incident management
- iv. The long term

2. **POLICY STATEMENT**

At St Patrick's Primary School we strive to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all students and staff. A policy is essential if we intend to minimise confusion, fear and uncertainty in the event of a serious incident. This policy will clarify, for the whole school community, the steps that must be taken to prepare and implement a thorough and systematic response to a critical incident.

3. **SCOPE**

This policy applies to all students, staff members, volunteers and visitors to the site at St Patrick's.

4. **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

A serious incident is an unusual or unexpected occurrence which causes disruption to the school and creates significant danger or risk. It includes:

- i. Suicide of a student or staff member
- ii. Serious illness or death of a member of the school community
- iii. A student or staff member lost, killed or injured on a school excursion or camp
- iv. A threat to life due to a medical condition, contagious or acute illness in the community
- v. Threats or actual harm caused to a member of the school community or the school itself
- vi. Student explosive behaviour events, or student violence
- vii. Injury and accidents to students or staff
- viii. Negative attention from media and/or police
- ix. Natural disasters (e.g. flood, earthquake, fire) that impact on the school or the local community
- x. Chemical spills
- xi. Harm caused to school animals
- xii. Property destruction or vandalism
- xiii. Theft of school property, student and staff work products
- xiv. Witnessing a traumatic event
- xv. Threats to the school, resulting in lock-down or evacuation
- xvi. Violent event in the community
- xvii. Violent world events

A serious incident potentially creates a situation in which staff, students and family members feel unsafe, vulnerable and under stress. Such incidents have the capacity to trigger a significant emotional reaction in people and/or to cause significant disruption to the normal operation of the school. The impact of a serious incident can be both immediate and long-term.

The early identification of and preparation for a serious incident is vital in maintaining a safe and supportive environment for students, staff and family members. It is the responsibility of all members of the St Patrick's School Community to respond to a serious incident in a way that aims to safeguard the health, safety and wellbeing of all members of the community. It is important to remember that the reaction of people to a serious incident varies between individuals.

5. **RESPONSIBILITIES**

The school's Serious Incident Management Team (SIMT) consists of the following personnel: principal, assistant principal, Religious Education Coordinator and school counsellor. There are four phases of a serious incident:

- i. Preparation, mitigation and training
- ii. Serious incident and immediate response
- iii. Post incident management
- iv. The long term

Each member of the SIMT has responsibilities within each of these phases. These responsibilities will overlap and will be reviewed throughout the duration of the serious incident:

Phase 1: Preparation, mitigation and training	
Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend CSO provided training. • Determine training needs of staff and arrange for training to occur. • Form a Serious Incident Management Team (SIMT). • Develop a school-based Serious Incident Policy and communicate it to the staff. • Establish a phone tree which will include the phone numbers of staff members and the assistant director. • Coordinate regular lockdown and evacuation drills. • Coordinate regular workplace inspections. • Provide opportunities at weekly housekeeping meetings for staff members to report potential hazards on the school site.
Assistant principal, Religious Education Coordinator and school counsellor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend CSO provided training

Phase 2: Serious incident and immediate response	
Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the situation and gather the facts. • Contact emergency services if required. • Ensure the safety of students, staff and visitors. • Contact the assistant director. • Contact immediate family members. (Do not give news of a death by phone). • Contact relevant people on the phone tree. Do not leave a message on voice mail or with young children. Avoid texting. • Correspond with families and other stakeholders. Sample letters can be found at (<i>MNWorks / Resources / Policy documents / Serious incident management policy / Serious Incident Management Support Documents / Phase 2 / Pages 16, 17</i>). • Liaise with the media in consultation with the Catholic Schools Office. Instruct staff members not to speak to the media. • Monitor situation and maintain communication. • If it is a notifiable incident that led to the serious incident, report the incident to SafeWork NSW.
Assistant principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate changes to school routines necessitated by the serious incident. • Arrange relief staff to replace personnel if necessary. • Designate counselling areas for students and staff if necessary. • Complete Serious Incident Report. (<i>MNWorks / Resources / Policy documents / Serious incident management policy / Serious Incident Management Support Documents / Phase 2 / Page 29</i>).
Religious Education Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer and provide support. • Arrange appropriate reflection/prayers.
School counsellor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer and provide support. • Communicate with the principal in regard to vulnerable students. • Liaise with the principal in regard to the school's ongoing needs.

Phase 3: Post incident management	
Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the school's response to the serious incident • Ensure that there is a timely and accurate response to legal and insurance proceedings. • Review school policies & procedures.
Assistant principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide education and support to all school community members who have been identified as requiring additional support.
Religious Education Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with the parish priest. • Liaise with the family in the event of a death. Refer to school calendar to identify key events throughout the year at which the serious incident should be addressed, e.g. anniversary of incident, class graduation of student who died. • Plan memorials and liturgies to assist the school community to deal with the serious incident.
School counsellor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer and provide support. • Communicate with the principal in regard to vulnerable students and staff members. • Liaise with the principal in regard to the school's ongoing needs. • Provide the school with resources relating to grief and trauma.

Phase 4: The long term	
Principal, assistant principal Religious Education Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to monitor and support students, staff and families who require additional support.
School counsellor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate further support for those students and staff experiencing trauma.

6. **BUDGET**

The school will make provision each year in its annual budget for professional development opportunities for the staff in regard to this area.

7. **NEXT REVIEW DATE**

This policy will be reviewed in 2021 in consultation with relevant staff.

8. **DEFINITIONS**

- i. **Serious incident**: An unusual or unexpected occurrence which causes disruption to the school and creates significant danger or risk.
- ii. **SIMT**: Serious Incident Management Team, which consists of the following personnel: principal, assistant principal, Religious Education Coordinator and school counsellor.
- iii. **Notifiable incident**: Either:
 - a. The death of a person, or:
 - b. A 'serious injury or illness', or:
 - c. A 'dangerous incident'.
- iv. **Serious injury or illness**: Any injury or illness that requires any of the following types of treatment:
 - a. Immediate treatment as an in-patient in a hospital
 - b. Immediate treatment for the amputation of any part of the body
 - c. Immediate treatment for a serious head injury
 - d. Immediate treatment for a serious eye injury
 - e. Immediate treatment for a serious burn
 - f. Immediate treatment for the separation of skin from an underlying tissue (such as de-gloving or scalping)
 - g. Immediate treatment for a spinal injury

- h. Immediate treatment for the loss of a bodily function
- i. Immediate treatment for serious lacerations
- j. Medical treatment within 48 hours of exposure to a substance

Notification is also required for serious illnesses that lead to an infection where the work is a significant contributing factor.

- v. **Dangerous incident:** A dangerous incident includes incidents in which people may not necessarily be injured. They include:
 - a. An uncontrolled escape, spillage or leakage of a substance
 - b. An uncontrolled implosion, explosion or fire
 - c. An uncontrolled escape of gas or steam
 - d. An uncontrolled escape of a pressurised substance
 - e. Electric shock
 - f. The fall or release from a height of any plant, substance or object.
 - g. The collapse or partial collapse of a structure

9. LEGISLATIVE / PROFESSIONAL GUIDELINES

- i. Serious Incident Management Policy (Catholic Schools Office, Diocese of Maitland Newcastle):
<https://mnworks.mn.catholic.edu.au/Resources/policies/Policies/Serious%20Incident%20Management%20Policy/Serious%20Incident%20Management%20Policy%20May%202015.pdf>
- ii. Serious Incident Management Support Documents (Catholic Schools Office, Diocese of Maitland Newcastle):
<https://mnworks.mn.catholic.edu.au/Resources/policies/default.aspx?RootFolder=%2FResources%2Fpolicies%2FPolicies%2FSerious%20Incident%20Management%20Policy&FolderCTID=0x0120000A0E2B7E97AA4E4582770D5E2729FF12&View={471D12BF-D704-46C8-967E-2AB03194AD7B}>
- iii. <http://www.whsnet.com>
- iv. SafeWork Australia Incident Notification Sheet: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/incident-notification-fact-sheet>

APPENDIX 1: PHONE TREE

In the event of a serious incident, staff members are asked to phone those people to whom the arrow points. If you are required to call somebody, please save to your phone:

1. Their phone numbers, and:
2. This phone tree.

