CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

Definition:
- Critical incidents are any events that render persons or property in danger, evoke severe distress, disrupt individual and organisational functioning or have the potential to leave lasting effects on those involved.
- A critical incident is determined by its impact on individuals and the community as a whole rather than by any predetermined list of events.
- Emotions and confusion can run high and rapid decision making is often called for.
- Emotional and psychological reactions to critical incidents are normal human reactions to unusually distressing and stressful circumstances and, with appropriate support, most people will eventually return to normal functioning.
- In the immediate aftermath of a critical incident early social and psychological interventions should focus on attending to physical needs, giving support, practical help and helping to obtain and provide information.
- Such incidents commonly involve – rapid time sequences, the overwhelming of usual coping responses of individuals and communities, severe disruption, or least temporarily, to the functioning of individuals or the community and perceptions of threat and helplessness and a turning to others for help. It is essential that those who provide treatment and other interventions following trauma have a thorough understanding of the reactions of children and adults and their treatment needs.
- It is incumbent on St Bernadette’s to have a well-established Critical Incident Management Plan.

Rationale:
We have a clear pastoral responsibility and a legal obligation under the duty of care to be properly prepared.

A major critical incident may confront and affect our school community at any stage.

Aim:
- Our approach to dealing with a critical incident, and the distress responses it may evoke, will be decisive and successful in shaping coping strategies and positive health outcomes.
- To ensure adequate attention to the health and vitality of the community’s coping mechanisms, our approach will be a resource in healing and restoring normal function as soon as possible.
- To ensure our approach/plan will support our school leadership personnel to meet the needs of our school community.
- Clear information and communication, continued structure in the school day and possibly extra physical or emotional support will be part of those needs of the community.
- All those involved – staff, students and families/community will be able to better deal appropriately with their responses to the crisis.
- The school will respond appropriately so that morale, communication, effectiveness and the health of individuals is not deleteriously affected.

Striving for Excellence
**Implementation:**
- A management plan of appropriate responses will be developed. This will include succinct procedures and processes for:
  - Identifying events and responses that require intervention.
  - Facilitation for rapid response from emergency authorities and care networks from both within and outside the school.
  - Education for management and personnel at various levels about grief, trauma or stress response in general.
- Key players will be thoroughly familiar with all dimensions of the Emergency Management Plan and issues involved and cognizant of best practice with respect to any psychological interventions, including debriefing and counselling.
- School staff will assume a role designated on the day.
- The Emergency Management Plan will include clear information and communication re:
  - prevention measures
  - response procedures
  - identification of tasks, roles and responsibilities
  - recovery arrangements including the mental health protection of those in a care-giving role
  - structure of the school day
  - extra support for students, staff and possibly parents/families
  - current student medical records
  - action checklist
  - review and evaluation
- The plan will be kept in appropriate locations and be easily accessible by all staff should the need arise.

**Evaluation:**
This policy will be reviewed as part of the school’s review cycle.