



## Serious Incident Management Policy St Pius X High School, Adamstown

Adopted 2013  
Updated 2016

### **Rationale:**

It is the responsibility of all members of the Catholic School Community to collaborate in the provision of a caring environment.

In today's society people can be exposed to a crisis situation, which could have serious effects on them. The school, by its very nature, is a major part of the student's social, cultural, spiritual and emotional environment.

A sensitive awareness of the varying needs and circumstances of students, staff and families is important in such a crisis. Arising from the duty of care that Principals and staff owe to students, for whom they have responsibility, planning the management of an abnormal or serious incident is essential.

The early identification of, and preparation for a potential serious incident, or crisis, will help in creating a safe, supportive environment for students and staff members. Education, greater awareness and the ways in which crises can be managed require planning, rehearsal and commitment. Providing support to staff and students is to empower them, and their families, to help themselves and to enhance their skills for future serious incidents in their lives.

### **Definition of a Serious Incident:**

A serious incident is any event that lies outside the ordinary day-to-day experiences of the school community and causes significant disruption to the school or sections of the school. It can cause members of the school community to feel threatened, unsafe, and vulnerable to immediate and/or ongoing physical and psychological harm.

A serious incident can be as the result of a sudden unexpected event or the result of an accumulation of stressful events. Within a community, a number of events may occur one after the other and each event may appear to be manageable. However, the accumulation of these events may compromise the wellbeing of the school community, and/or individuals within that community. (*Catholic Schools Office Serious Incident Management Policy 2015*)

Serious incidents may display some of the following features:

- are dangerous or distressing
- are sudden and unexpected
- occur following long-term exposure to a stressor(s)
- are disruptive to a person's sense of control of events occurring around them
- are disruptive to a person's beliefs and assumptions about the world, people and work
- include elements of physical or emotional loss, or the threat/risk of loss

It is important to understand that an incident or situation that may not be regarded as 'serious' or 'critical' to one person, may present very differently to another.

Serious incidents within school communities can include but are not limited to:

- Suicide, serious illness or death of a student, staff or member of the school community
- A student or staff member lost, killed or injured on a school excursion or camp
- A threat to life due to a medical condition, contagious or acute illness in the community
- Threats or actual harm caused to a member of the school community or the school itself
- Student explosive behaviour events, or student violence
- Injury and accidents to students, staff or parents/carers
- Negative attention from media and/or police
- Natural disasters (e.g. flood, earthquake, fire) that impact on the school or the local community
- Chemical spills
- Harm caused to school animals
- Property destruction or vandalism
- Theft of school property, student and staff work products
- Witnessing a traumatic event
- Threats to the school, resulting in lock-down or evacuation
- Enforced school closure
- Violent event in the community
- Violent world events

**Aim:**

To meet the needs of the school community if or when it is involved in a serious incident by:

1. Assisting the bereaved
2. Monitoring those individuals most "at risk" as a result of the Serious Incident
3. Allowing feelings in response to the Serious Incident to be expressed and affirmed
4. Maintaining a balance between Serious Incident Management and School Management

## **Implementation of Serious Incident Management Process:**

- The Principal will ensure that procedures are developed that cater for the 4 phases identified in the CSO Serious Incident Policy 2015 and that they are in accordance with the policy.

### **Phase 1**      *Preparation, Mitigation and Training*

The Principal will:

- oversee the creation, evaluation and modification of the school's Serious Incident Management Plan (SIMP)
- determine the training needs of staff
- form a Serious Incident Management Team (SIMT) and
- communicate to all staff the importance of preparation, mitigations and training.

### **Phase 2**      *Serious Incident and Immediate Response*

The Principal/School Leaders and members of the SIMT will:

- assess the safety of students, staff and visitors
- ensure student and staff wellbeing remains a priority
- activate the SIMP

### **Phase 3**      *Post Incident Management*

The Principal/School Leaders and members of the SIMT will:

- complete all required documentation
- continue to monitor and provide support to all school community members (including members of the SIMT)
- review school procedures

### **Phase 4**      *Long Term Management*

The Principal/School Leaders and members of the SIMT will:

- monitor student and staff wellbeing
- review school's Serious Incident Policy

## **The Serious Incident Management Team (SIMT)**

- The Serious Incident Management Team (SIMT) will consist of the Executive Team plus the School Counsellor.
- The Coordinator of the SIMT is the Principal or his/her delegate.
- The SIMT is responsible for ensuring:
  - a coordinated and appropriate response to all serious incidents.
  - the establishment and dissemination of the facts in a clear, accurate and controlled manner.
  - the school continues to operate in an orderly fashion with an obvious need for flexibility as required.
  - the provision of essential support during and after the serious incident for students and staff.
  - the longer-term needs arising from the serious incident are monitored.

### **Serious Incident Management Plan (SIMP)**

- A Staff member who becomes aware that a critical incident has occurred must contact the Principal or an Assistant Principal to inform them of the occurrence. All staff members have access to the Assistant Principals' phone numbers. **Immediate**
- If an Assistant Principal has been informed of a critical incident, he/she must contact the Principal to inform him/her of the incident. **Immediate**
- The Principal will make the decision as to whether all staff need to be informed of the incident. If so, the Principal will take steps to inform all staff as quickly as possible. If the notification of the incident has occurred outside normal school hours, the Principal may initiate the SMS & Email Tree. See Attachment 1 for details of the tree structures. If the notification of the incident has occurred during normal school hours, the Principal may still use the Email Tree to assist in alerting staff and parents to the incident. **Immediate**
- The Principal will make the decision as to whether the SIMT needs to be convened to manage the incident. **Immediate**
- If notification of the incident has occurred during normal school hours, a major priority is for the Principal (or delegate) to alert Student Services and Main Office Staff to the protocols to be followed in regards to information to be provided to parents and the public and assistance to be given to students who come to the Offices in distress.
- The SIMP will usually but not always include a full school assembly and follow-up process as outlined in Attachment 5: Serious Incident Management Plan Flowchart shown on the final page of this policy document. Any SIMP must be tailored to meet the needs of the community in the best possible way for each individual critical incident.
- All Teaching Staff are to provide the school and their Studies Coordinator with a mobile phone contact number on which they can be reached. All Support Staff are to provide school and the Office Manager with a mobile phone contact number on which they can be reached.
- Attachments 2, 3 and 4 provide useful suggestions of a meeting agenda and procedures which may be appropriate to follow in response to the serious incident.

### **Budget:**

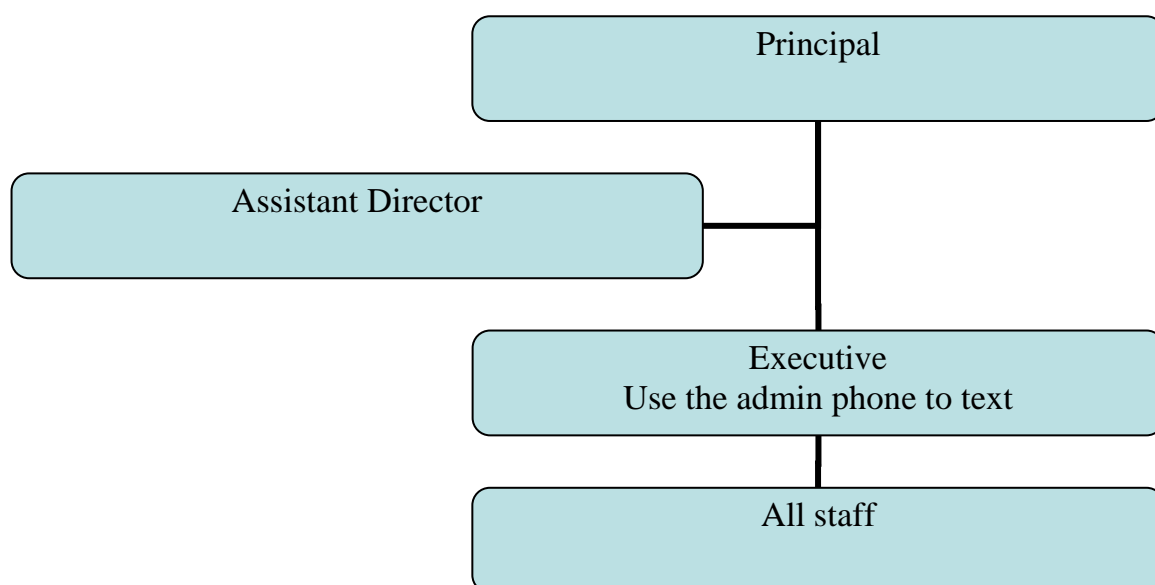
Provision will be made in the School Budget to enable funds to be available for use in response to critical incidents when they occur.

### **Evaluation:**

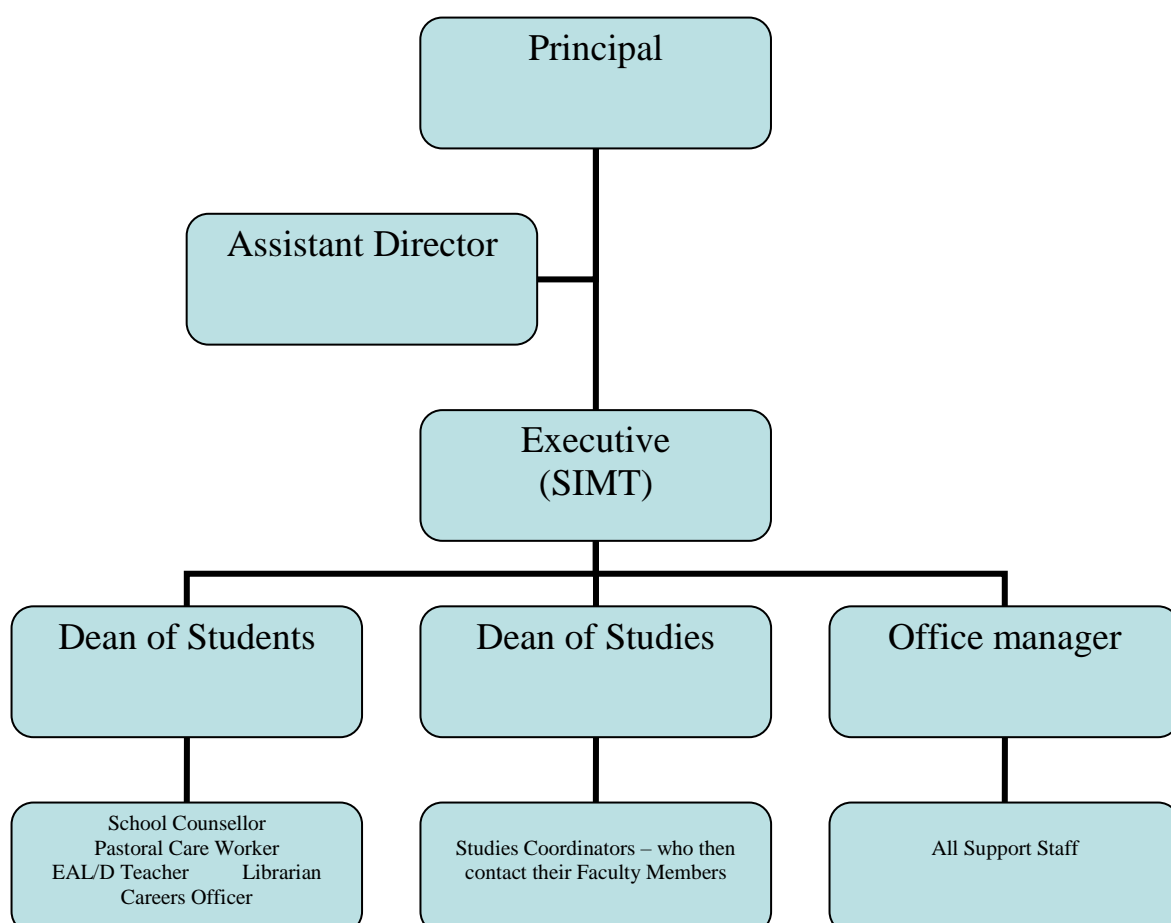
This policy and associated procedures will be evaluated every five years or as the need arises.

## ATTACHMENT 1: Phone & Email Trees

**Version 1 (Text message) – where personal communication of news is not required**



**Version 2 (Voice message) - where personal communication of news is required**



**NOTE: Phone tree variations**

Given the varied nature of possible serious incidents and the size of the St Pius X staff, there are 2 versions of the phone tree listed on the previous page.

**Version 1** – This is for incidents where a personal communication of the news is NOT required. Text message sent to all staff from staff phone notifying of an incident (e.g. damage to site)

**Version 2** – This is for incidents such as a death or serious injury to a student or member of staff that occurs outside of school hours. The news is to be delivered by a person.

Members of the SIMT personally contact all people as indicated in the Version 2 flowchart and give them the news. Initially, the members of the SIMT are to text the various people they are responsible for contacting and request that these people phone them back. So, for instance, the Dean of Studies will text all Studies Coordinators. They will phone Dean of Studies and then text their Faculty members asking them to phone back so they can deliver the message personally.

A script could be provided by the SIMT to those who have to make contact with others. This could be emailed out immediately after contact.

**Email Tree for Staff & Parent Contact:**

- The Principal or his/her delegate may also use the school email system to send an email to all staff providing details of the incident and the plan of action when this is known.
- The Principal or his/her delegate will arrange for a message to be sent to all parents via one or all of the following methods: the Newsletter email link; Skoolbag App; Facebook Page; School Electronic Sign; or School Website. This message will provide details of the incident and the plan of action when this is known.

## **ATTACHMENT 2: SIMT Meeting – Possible Agenda**

- Prayer
- Outline the details of the situation:
  - What has happened
  - What has been verified
  - Who is involved
  - What steps have been taken so far
- Communication
  - Who has been notified so far
  - Prepare statement for staff/media/family
- Resources
  - Within school (including Procedures Handbook)
  - External (not just CSO)
- Plan – general outline
  - What needs to happen (refer to handbook for possible actions)
  - Determine the immediate priorities
- Allocation of roles and responsibilities within each
  - Consider timeframe as appropriate
- Schedule time for next meeting and ensure communication between members of the SIMT

### **ATTACHMENT 3: Serious Injury or death of student or member of staff (during holiday break)**

1. Notification and verification
2. Contact SIMT and CSO
3. Meet at school  
Use check lists and resources to assist  
Key considerations will be:
  - Preparing what to say
  - Notification of staff (tree #2)
  - Notification of parents/students NB social media will be active already
  - Staff the school phone to take calls
  - “no comment” to any media requests - refer to CSO
  - May need to arrange something at the school to allow people to gather (week 2 there is an eisteddfod in the factory area)
  - Support services available
  - If there is a funeral during the holidays notify staff

#### **Day 1 of Term**

1. Staff briefing
  - outline the organisation for the day
  - support services available for staff and students – access
  - casual staff may be needed to supervise playground whilst this takes place
2. Assembly – as early as possible/appropriate
  - provide the facts
  - simple prayer
  - outline resources for support and how to access
  - open invitation to liturgy held later that day or the next day
3. Establish spaces for liturgy, prayer/quiet reflection (but supervised space), counselling  
Consider having “things to do” in a space e.g. card/letter/....



#### **ATTACHMENT 4: Damage to the school (e.g. storm, fire, Vandalism)**

1. Notification and determine extent of damage. If damage is not significant enough to cause a disruption to normal school activity then deal with as required. Otherwise go to point 2 below.
2. Contact SIMT and CSO
3. Meet at school if able to do so  
Use check lists and resources to assist  
Key considerations will be:
  - Preparing what to say
  - Notification of staff (tree #1)
  - Determine if the school can run, what needs to be done to ensure the site is safe etc. Does the school need to close? For how long?
  - Tony Fraser – trades contacts
  - Frances Bowen - insurance
  - Site inspection to ensure safety – HSC and/or CSO and/or Malman Constructions as required
  - Notification of parents/students (email, skoolbag, sign, facebook, website)
  - Staff the school phone to take calls
  - “no comment” to any media requests - refer to CSO
  - Consider our HSC members being briefed prior to staff return
  - May need to liaise with Joshua Holliday (0413 101 735) as there may be bookings for The Factory Theatre and therefore other people to contact

#### **Day 1 of Term**

1. Staff briefing
  - outline the organisation for the day
  - timeline for repairs etc
  - restricted areas if any etc
2. Assembly – if significant damage as early as possible/appropriate – or Care Class if damage does not require major changes
  - outline required changes to access
  - any other organisation.

## ATTACHMENT 5: St Pius X High School, Adamstown Serious Incident Management Plan Flowchart

