



Critical Event Policy

BOS Manual, 3.6.2

Related policies:

- **Pastoral Care Policy**
- **Suicide Prevention Policy**

RATIONALE

This document has been prepared primarily in response to the perceived need for this school to have a management plan for crisis situations, hereafter known as *critical events*. Each year several schools in NSW experience critical events which affect the welfare of students, staff and the community at large. Critical events may include the death of a student or a member of staff in tragic circumstances such as the result of an accident, murder or suicide; a natural disaster which destroys all or part of the school; or an accident on an excursion involving the death or injury of students and/or staff.

Our school has experienced four critical events: the death of Joseph Hannaford in 1992; the vandalism of school buildings in 1995; and the separate deaths of Ashlee Etheredge and John Eaton in 2001.

AIM

Schools are a focus of community attention when Critical event incidents occur and we have a responsibility to respond with a well considered management plan that aims to assist all those affected if such a need arises.

A Critical Event Management Plan will enable the school to act in such a way that the trauma following a critical event is minimized for all those concerned.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Critical Event Management Plan will detail specific roles for key people. Staff will be informed of the plan and know what role they are to play in the event of a critical incident.

Appointment of a Postvention Coordinator and Intervention Team

The Postvention Coordinator implements the critical event management plan. The Intervention team is made up of school personnel, selected local pastors and works under the Postvention Coordinator.

After consultation with various pastors and school staff the following postvention team has been developed.

HIGH SCHOOL:	Dave Hamilton/Paul Edwards	Postvention Coordinator
	Maureen Hamilton	Teacher
	Phil Jones	Teacher
	Jaimie Newans	Pastor - Presbyterian Church
JUNIOR SCHOOL:	Dave Hamilton/Paul Edwards	Postvention Co-ordinator
	Vicki Bennett	Deputy Principal
	Terrence Yardley	Co-ordinator 2
	Jaimie Newans	Pastor - Presbyterian Church

The Postvention Coordinator may, depending on the situation, and in consultation with the Principal or Deputy Principal, request the assistance of other Pastors or lay people.

Critical Event Management Plan

1. It is the Principal's responsibility to determine whether or not a critical incident has taken place and therefore whether or not to implement the management plan. In the absence of the Principal or the Deputy Principal of the relevant campus involved, the Postvention Coordinator would make the decision.
2. In the case of a critical event occurring, the Postvention Coordinator is to obtain factual information from the relevant sources (e.g. next of kin, police etc) and determine what details are to be made public. *Only the Principal, Senior Deputy Principal or Postvention Coordinator are to speak with the media.*
3. The Executive and Postvention Coordinator meet with support personnel.
4. The Intervention Team is contacted.
5. A full staff meeting is called to inform staff and to pray about the situation. Accurate details are passed on to the staff so that they can pass them on to the students.

6. Students are informed about the situation by teachers in the smallest groups possible, devotion groups for the secondary school, class groups for Infants/Primary. It is important that teachers pass on the correct information to students and discourage rumour or speculation. In the case of a probable suicide, it is best referred to as a "tragic death" until the coroner releases the findings of the post-mortem. Students are to be informed of the actions taken by the school (eg special memorial service) and be made aware of the availability of counseling if needed. Students should be allowed to discuss the incident and express how they feel about what has happened and to pray about it. Teachers are to identify "at risk" students - students who may be particularly upset and may need special counseling. Their names should be passed on to the Postvention Coordinator.
7. Parents and families are contacted. A note may be sent home with students detailing what has happened and expressing the school's sympathy and advising families of support services available. Parents of "at risk" students are contacted by telephone regarding their child's welfare and advised of the availability of counseling assistance.
8. The school reverts to regular timetable and routines.
9. The Management Plan is evaluated. The Postvention Coordinator is responsible for evaluating the plan. Student and parent responses will indicate the level of success of our aims. Staff will also evaluate the appropriateness of the management plan. This will include comments on the follow-up devotion lessons. The Postvention Coordinator will then write a summary of the management and any follow-up required.