



St Columba's School Bayswater

Grow in Faith Seek Wisdom Live in Peace

Crisis Management Policy

VISION STATEMENT

St Columba's Primary School aims to foster the total development of each individual, within a loving community, that is totally committed to supporting the Catholic faith, principles and ideals within the framework of the Mercy Values.

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1) Introduction

This information is designed to provide a contingency plan to the staff of St Columba's School in the case of an emergency or crisis.

It should be stated that this is simply a guide and should never be substituted for the sensitive handling of individual crisis situations that may occur, from time to time, within the school.

St. Columba's Vision Statement and Mercy Core Values

The St Columba's School principles and Mercy Core Values of **Mercy, Justice, Service, Compassion and Excellence** will guide our deliberations in any crisis situation.

2) Crisis Intervention Committee

The school has established what will be known as a '*Crisis Intervention Committee*'. The purpose of this committee is to co-ordinate the management of tasks that may be deemed necessary if a crisis occurs within the school community.

The Crisis Intervention Committee consists of the following people or designates:

- Principal - Convenor
- Assistant Principals
- Senior Staff Members
- Administration Team
- Parish Priest

The management of the activities of the committee will always be handled by the Principal.

All members of the Crisis Intervention Committee will have a list of all staff phone numbers.

3) Crisis Situations

The following are crisis situations that could arise:

a) Students

- Attempted suicide
- Completed suicide
- Child abuse
- Accidental death

- Death from illness
- Abduction

b) Family

- Death of a parent
- Death of a sibling

c) Staff

- Death

4) Role of Staff in Crisis

There are three levels of involvement in a crisis situation:

- i) Intervention
- ii) Psychological Counselling
- iii) Treatment

Those working in schools need to be aware of the important distinctions between the above terms. Although the three are not always totally separated, they represent, practically and conceptually, different levels of involvement with students in crisis.

Intervention refers to the crisis level of involvement in which the helper considers there to be a significant possibility or there has been an occurrence of threatening behaviour to the student(s). The focus is on evaluating the gravity of the situation and determining what actions are needed. It is at this level that staff members are invariably involved.

In the case of staff contact with students in which 'students disclose critical information' to the staff member, this information should be referred to the Crisis Intervention Committee (CIC).

Psychological Counselling refers to the helping process and skills used by a trained person for the purpose of assisting another person.

Treatment refers to a psychotherapeutic involvement by a specialist with skills to address the underlying issues.

Teaching staff would usually be involved at the intervention level where possible and would leave the counselling and treatment to other professionals.

Procedure

A staff member, if involved in any way in a crisis, must contact the Principal, who is the convener of the Crisis Intervention Committee.

Staff member(s) are to take control of the situation until support is available from the School. Staff should, at an appropriate time, commit in writing the events relating to the crisis.

The Crisis Intervention Committee is to be brought together as soon as possible after a crisis has occurred and will disseminate information to the appropriate groups.

Facts are to be ascertained from:

- a) Staff
- b) Students
- c) Parents
- d) Police
- e) Emergency services

Formation of support team:

- a) Selection of appropriate School staff.
- b) Principal, or their delegate, to contact the Non-Government Psychology Service for assistance.

All information disseminated needs to be:

- a) Factual
- b) Given on the basis of "need to know"
- c) Controlled by Crisis Intervention Committee

Depending on the nature of the crisis situation, members of the Crisis Intervention Committee may have the following responsibilities:

Principal

- a) Contact Catholic Education Office (CEO), Catholic Primary Principals' Association (CPPA), Non-Government Schools' Psychology Service and, where applicable, Catholic Assistant Principals' Association (CAPA).
- b) Call a meeting for all staff members and draft a memo.
- c) Draft a memo for staff to read to students, including a suitable prayer.
- d) Draft a letter for parents.
- e) Monitor staff and student welfare.
- f) Plan for removal of the student's belongings so as to avoid distress and/or embarrassment.

Assistant Principals

- a) Contact key staff.
- b) Assist with telephone contact and logistics.
- c) Coordinate any changes to the school program.
- d) Coordinate removal of student's belongings from the School, if appropriate.

- e) Monitor staff and student welfare.
- f) Coordinate any services to be held for the students.
- g) Assist the family with planning other services as required.
- h) Contact the School's Parent Pastoral Care Group.

Parish Priest

- a) Ascertain faith level of the family.
- b) Visit the family.
- c) Assist the family with planning other services as required.

Senior Staff Members and Administration Team

- a) Assist with telephone contact and logistics.

Staff

- a) All staff members will be informed personally, if possible, and then by memo or e-mail. The memo will include a statement for students.
- b) Front office reception staff will be informed and given advice on dealing with the situation.
- c) All absent staff to be contacted.

Students

- a) Close friends and siblings, and those members of the community who require counselling, will be counselled by a member of the Non-Government Psychology Service.
- b) A prepared written statement will be used to inform the student body to minimise speculation and rumour, at the CIC's discretion.

Parents

- a) It is imperative that parents are officially notified on the same day as the student body receives the information. (Letter handed to students).
- b) An item will be published in the Newsletter or if necessary a special letter will be sent home as soon as practical.

Media

- a) Any contact is to be made by the Principal.

Website

- a) If appropriate, the website may be used to provide support material in dealing with grief and loss.

5) Death of a Student/Family Member

It is possible that a staff member may be in the situation where they are required, by circumstances, to inform the student of the death of a significant person in their lives.

The following strategy is a suggestion as to how to deal with the situation:

- a) Isolate the student in a quiet area away from others.
- b) If possible have another person with you and the student.
- c) Inform the student that you have some sad news "I have some sad news to tell you",
then give them the news from a prepared statement.
- d) Different people have different reactions so be prepared to accept a range of behaviour.
- e) Do not leave the student until they are in the care of either family or another responsible adult.
- f) Also be prepared to accept that you will have a 'grief' reaction and work through that, seeking counselling if appropriate.

6) After the Crisis Event

Following a crisis situation, it may be appropriate to consider both medium and long-term issues. The following points should be considered:

Medium Term

- a) What follow up is planned for the next week?
- b) Who will attend the funeral? (if applicable).
- c) What follow up is in place to monitor reactions within the school community?
- d) What follow up is in place to monitor reactions of those directly affected by the crisis event?

Longer Term

- a) When will the Crisis Intervention Team reconvene to review the response?
- b) Will anything be done to mark the anniversary? (if applicable).
- c) Will staff need to be reminded of the anniversary to watch for students at risk? (if applicable).