Critical Incident Policy

On occasions, schools will experience a crisis situation or critical incident which affects the whole school community and which needs considered, compassionate and immediate response.

A critical incident is defined as:

“any situation faced by members of the School community that causes significant disruption and strong emotional reactions which have the potential to interfere with their ability to function either at that time or later.”

Potential critical incidents include such events as:

- The death or critical injury of a student or staff member including student/staff suicide
- Serious accident on an excursion/sports event etc.
- Students and/or staff experiencing a very dangerous situation
- Public allegations of serious misconduct involving members of the School
- A natural disaster in the community
- Threat of epidemic illness in the School community
- Serious disciplinary action in the school.

Some incidents are likely to cause great emotional reactions while others will have less of an impact. Not all incidents will require a full-scale response. The extent of the emotional impact on the School community and the extent of the changes to School routines will determine the extent of the response but it should be remembered that several small-scale incidents may have cumulative effect: small groups within the School may be deeply traumatised and they may need intervention to stop the ripple effect within the School.

**PRINCIPLES**

- All personnel to be informed of all known facts as soon as possible with staff being informed when possible before students. This is done with the knowledge that some information may be withheld for privacy reasons, family requests or legal requirements
- The incident is acknowledged appropriately and not ignored
- Normal routine is maintained as much as possible with allowance for individual and group needs
- Recognition is made of the different effects on individuals of the one situation
- Provision is made for immediate needs of both student(s) and staff as well as for longer-term needs of some members of the community
- In the event of a Critical incident a Crisis Management Team will be formed. Its primary responsibility will be an action plan. This team will consist of the Headmaster, Deputy Headmaster and Teachers. External counsellors may be called in where necessary. It will convene as soon as practically possible after a critical incident.
NB: Often a crisis will trigger people’s past grief and reactions and experienced counsellors who can recognise these reactions need to be included in the Crisis Management Team.