TRAUMA & GRIEF MANAGEMENT POLICY

INTRODUCTION

St. Joseph’s School is a place of learning. It is also an important element of the Catholic Church, which embraces care and concern for the entire school, St. Joseph’s Parish and the wider Stanthorpe communities. The effective and efficient management of trauma and grief is critical to the safety and well-being of students, staff and school visitors.

RATIONALE

MISSION STATEMENT

“St. Joseph’s School offers an holistic education within a Catholic Christian environment whilst developing and valuing the uniqueness of the individual as we encourage each student to become a life long learner.”

The mission statement of St. Joseph’s School stresses the idea of “an holistic education”, a goal that can only be provided consistently through the efficient handling of trauma and grief. It also stresses education within a Catholic Christian environment, which implies concern and empathy for all. “Valuing the uniqueness of the individual” implies treating people with compassion and understanding. Such situations need to be seen as opportunities for life-long learning.

MERCY VALUES

- Respect
- Dignity
- Compassion.

DEFINITIONS

TRAUMA:

- A powerful shock or experience that may have long-lasting mental and physical effects.

GRIEF:

- Deep or intense sorrow or distress, especially at the death of someone, or loss of something that causes keen suffering.

POLICY STATEMENT

Schools are becoming increasingly aware of the need to provide support to those in the school community who have been exposed to a disturbing or traumatic experience. As a result, there is a need at St. Joseph’s School for trauma and grief management to be in place. This management needs to take account of the four
sequential phases of a traumatic experience: mitigation, preparation, response and recovery.

The mitigation phase involves anticipating traumatic events and preventing or minimising their effects.

Preparation includes tasks such as the education and training of key personnel, the negotiation of clear protocols for intervention by outside agencies, the writing of action plans and the familiarisation and rehearsal of these with personnel.

As a result of this mitigation and preparation process, an expedient response is to be expected. Response includes identification and assessment of the traumatic event and those who are affected. Further, it includes the mobilisation of the key personnel and outside agencies, and the implementation of procedures and specific action plans.

Recovery includes the continued monitoring and assessment of the effectiveness of the response.

CONSEQUENCES:

- A trauma and grief management plan will be formulated in consultation with staff and CEO. Such a plan will need to be flexible and adaptable to the varying situations as they arise. This plan will be communicated to the School Community.
- Counselling and ongoing support will be a feature of the plan.
- In line with other School policies, personal safety is an essential part of the School’s curriculum.
- Communication and information will be disseminated throughout the School and the wider Community.

Michael McCarthy          Chris Haynes
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