Walford

POLICY 4.4

CRITICAL INCIDENT

INTRODUCTION

Walford Anglican School for Girls takes seriously its duty of care for all members of the School community and has in place a number of policies, programs and procedures to create a safe and supportive environment for all students, employees, parents and visitors. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Emergency Response Procedures, which is located on the staff SharePoint.

Critical incidents by their very nature are disruptive events that can have serious effects on people. The Walford Critical Incident Policy enables the School to respond promptly and effectively to such events. The policy allows the School to manage each situation professionally and to minimise the potential adverse effects of the incident.

The following pages outline preventative measures, basic procedures regarding initial responses, and follow-up actions to deal with both the immediate consequences and longer-term implications of a critical incident. The policy provides general directions in broad terms.

While all staff members should be familiar with this policy and respond to any incident with the safety of students and members of the School community in mind, response to specific incidents is always at the discretion of the Principal or her delegate. It is the Principal who will assess the situation and determine the best possible response given the unique situation of the particular incident.

DEFINITION OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT

A critical incident is an event that results in disruption to the School and creates significant danger or risk with the potential to cause:

- extreme physical and/or emotional distress to students, staff or parents;
- significant negative impact on operations; or
- significant financial loss.

It is an event that is outside of the normal range of experiences and may take place on or off campus. Critical incidents are events with serious repercussions that take place suddenly or unexpectedly. They also can be the result of longer-term developments that come to a head in a sudden and dramatic manner.

Critical incidents may:

- Be extremely dangerous or distressing.
- Be sudden and unexpected.
- Be disruptive to one's sense of control of events around them.
- Be disruptive to one's beliefs and assumptions about the world, people and work.
- Include elements of physical or emotional loss or risk of loss.

Examples of critical incidents involving students, staff, parents or other members of the School community:

- Accidental death
- Suicide or attempted suicide
- Murder
- Serious injury or illness
- Serious road traffic accidents
- Physical or sexual assault
- Serious threatening behaviour or threats of violence
- Kidnap or hostage threat
- Students or staff lost on an excursion
- Students or staff witnessing a serious accident or violent incident
- Bomb or firearms threat
- Suspicious package/item
- Attempted robbery or theft
- Epidemic or outbreak of disease
- Major vandalism or destruction of School property
- Building structure collapse including key infrastructure or facilities failure
- Fire or explosion
- Bushfire

- Gas, chemical or electrical hazards
- Natural disasters
- Serious cyber security event or suspected event
- Major IT systems failure

REPORTING A CRITICAL INCIDENT

The Principal or delegate must be contacted immediately any Walford staff member becomes aware of a critical incident or a perceived critical incident.

CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE TEAM

The Principal or delegate will:

- assess the nature and seriousness of any incident reported to them;
- determine if it is a critical incident;
- call together appropriate members of the Critical Incident Response Team; and
- advise and direct the appropriate response.

Ultimate responsibility for overseeing the response to a critical incident and necessary follow up resides with the Principal.

The Principal or delegate may also contact any external advisers they consider necessary for advice and/or support.

Members of the Critical Incident Response Team

Chair of the Critical Incident Response Team:

- Principal

Members of the Critical Incident Response Team may include:

- Relevant Head of School and/or Boarding House Manager
- Director of Finance and Corporate Services
- Director of Marketing and Community Engagement
- Property Services Manager
- Head of Information and Learning Technologies
- School Chaplain
- School Counsellor
- School Nurse

Co-opted members of the Critical Incident Response Team, as required, may include:

- Chair of the Council of Governors or their delegate
- Media or crisis communications consultant
- Lawyer
- Specialist Consultants

BUSHFIRE RESPONSE PROCEDURES

The Front Office monitors South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission (SAFECOM) bushfire alerts provided on the Alert SA platform and AISSA Bulletins to assist in protecting the safety of students and staff who reside in bushfire risk areas.

The Front Office will determine if any SAFECOM alerts received by it have implications for any school camps or excursions, if any students or staff reside in the affected area and the area forms part of a Walford Bus route.

In response to notices of fire bans and alerts received from SAFECOM in conjunction with AISSA, the School will ensure that students are not transported into bushfire-affected areas either on excursions, camps or travelling home from school on a School-organised bus.

If a bushfire is reported, the following action is to be taken.

The Front Office will:

- Identify and print list of students and staff who live in the affected areas (**Bushfire List**) and provide to the Principal as chair of the Critical Incident Response Team.

- Contact parents and staff under instruction from the Director of Marketing and Community Engagement informing them of any changes to camps and dismissal or travel procedures
- Record on the Bushfire List the names of any students who are collected from school by parents during the day.
- Divert telephone lines to the Boarding House at 5.00pm.

In the event of a bushfire, the Critical Incident Response Team will:

- Cancel bus services if appropriate.
- Cancel excursions, camps and Exeats if appropriate.
- Oversee notification of parents and staff that a fire has been reported.
- Assess if it is safe to dismiss students at normal dismissal time.
- Respond to the need to provide care for students for an extended period of time, such as by arranging additional staff supervision to care for students for an extended period of time in the Senior School Library or Junior School OSHC (OSHC) and provide a student roll; informing parents when possible that students will be cared for in OSHC and parents to confirm who will be collecting the student and at what time; and arranging accommodation in the Boarding House in extreme circumstances if the fire prevents students from being collected.
- Ensure that students from the affected area(s) are only be released into the control of their parents or guardians or other person(s) nominated by parents.
- Ensure that an ELT staff member remains on duty until all students are collected from the School

On any forecast **catastrophic fire danger day** (as determined under the Australian Fire Danger Rating System which is used by SAFECOM), all School bus services will be cancelled in relevant areas. Whenever possible, the School will notify relevant families the day before that School bus services are to be cancelled. The relevant Head of School will cancel student excursions, camps and staff off-site meetings into affected areas except for the metropolitan fire ban district and notify relevant parents, students and staff.

In the case of a forecast **high risk bush fire danger day** (as determined under the Australian Fire Danger Rating System which is used by SAFECOM), the Heads of School will determine if excursions and camps to fire risk areas are to be cancelled and notify the Principal. The School will notify parents, students and staff of any cancellations or changes to arrangements.

EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS

School Contacts:

Key Roles	Name	Phone
Principal	Deborah Netolicky	0404 044 648
Director of Finance and Corporate Services	Nancy Johnson	0488 193 631
Property Manager	Ian Chadwick	0427 411 102
Head of Junior School	Cathie Egarr	0422 452 611
Head of Secondary School	Alice Speirs	0409 606 380
Head of Boarding	Edwina Birrell	0431 315 341
Head of ILT	Kyle Heading	0407 790 415
Health Centre	(Nurse on Duty)	Ext. 0417 500 161 Int. Ext 171
Chaplain	Rev Michael Lane	0434 297 879

Other Contacts:

Contact	Phone
Access Counselling Services	1300 667 700
AISSA	8179 1400
APG Day Patrol (Dennis Flanigan)	0434 786 490
APG Patrols	0417 854 649
Emergency Services	000
SA Power Networks	13 13 66
Fire Brigade	000 or 8204 3600
Front Office	External: 8272 6555 Internal: Ext 555
Health SA – central office	8226 6000
Hughes Medical Clinic	8272 8266

Poisons Information Centre	13 11 26
Police	000 or 13 1444
Property Services Manager	0419 555 897
Rape Crisis Centre	8226 8787
Red Cross	0417 863 966
St Andrews Hospital	8408 2111
St John Ambulance	000 or 8274 0444
State Emergency Services	132 500 (emergency)
Women's & Children's Hospital	8161 7000

RELATED POLICIES

3.2 Child Safe Environment Policy.docx
3.4 Reporting Suspicions of Child Abuse (Mandatory Reporting) Policy.docx
4.1 Risk Management.docx
4.4a Emergency Response Procedures
4.5 Emergency Evacuation Secondary School .docx
4.6 Emergency Evacuation Junior School.docx
4.7 Lock Down.docx
8.2 Sexual Harassment.docx
8.3 Anti-Bullying and Harassment.docx
8.5 Work Health Safety .docx
10.1 Media.docx

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Critical Incident Escalation Process

Date Issued:	March 2015
Last Reviewed:	June 2026
Next Review:	June 2027
Responsibility:	Principal
Policy Number:	4.4

APPENDIX A: CRITICAL INCIDENT ESCALATION PROCESS

In the event of a potential or actual critical incident, assessment of an incident must consider both the reaction of any individual or individuals directly affected and the effects on the wider School community both in the short and long term. The aim of this escalation process is to ensure a consistent approach to crisis management across the School.

The following procedures should be followed.

1. Immediate Response

Who
The person to whose attention the incident is first brought, and Principal or delegate.

What

a. Ensure safety

- Take a few moments to stop and think. It is critical to maintain a coordinated approach and to remain calm.
- Issue clear instructions to ensure safety, if immediately necessary.
- Take whatever action is needed to ensure the safety of anyone impacted or potentially impacted and provide assistance where possible.
- Remove people who are at risk or provide assistance as required.

b. Notify appropriate people and services

In an Emergency	
Call Police, Ambulance, Fire Services	000

- An incident or potential incident that causes immediate risk to life or property should be immediately reported to Police, Security, Ambulance and the Principal.
- Record details of the incident, including:
    - Description of the incident.
    - People, facilities and systems affected.
    - Time of occurrence.
    - Any immediate impact on business operations.
- During school hours, notify the Front Office (8272 6555 or ext 555), as appropriate.
- Notify the Property Services Manager, as appropriate.
- Principal, Front Office or Property Services Manager to contact relevant emergency services if not contacted.
- If appropriate, Property Services Manager to go to the scene immediately to assess the situation and take appropriate action.

2. Impact Assessment

Who
The Principal or her delegate.

What

- Assess the extent of disruption or trauma within the School community.
- Assess priorities.
- Collect additional information if needed.
- Determine if the issue can be resolved quickly.
- If necessary, implement evacuation/invacuation procedures.
- If necessary, assemble a Critical Incident Response Team.
- When safe, and as soon as practicable, the Principal to call a meeting of the appropriate members of the Critical Incident Response Team in a safe location or by electronic means as determined by the Principal.
- Close school as required.
- Establish a 24-hour information line.

If the incident is classified as Critical or cannot be resolved, or a resolution identified, within 15 minutes, escalate to Critical Response.

3. Escalation to Critical Response

Who

The Principal and assembled Critical Incident Response Team.

What

In order to stabilise, monitor and respond to the situation, the Critical Incident Response Team will at all times continue to ensure the safety of all students, staff and community. At the direction of the Principal or her delegate, they will design and implement Critical Incident Response Plan.

- Undertake a risk assessment of potential hazards and situations.
- Appoint a Critical Incident Coordinator, if required.
- Appoint a media spokesperson (usually the Principal).
- Analyse requirements to address items identified in the risk assessment report.
- Develop a Critical Incident Response Plan, including identifying:
    - *Who*: People involved.
    - *Where*: Place/site involved.
    - *Command centre*: In person and/or online space for centralisation of information and collaboration.
    - *Tasks and roles*: of members of the Team.
    - *Contacts*: E.g. Chair of the Council of Governors, AISSA, family, friends, community members, lawyers and crisis communications consultants as required.
    - *Check statutory and legal requirements*.
    - *Internal support personnel and actions*: E.g. Front Office support, Chaplain and pastoral support, Chapel or other space for pastoral support and recovery, develop resources.
    - *External stakeholders*: e.g. emergency services, authorities.
    - *Processes and actions to be undertaken*: E.g. supervision of property or structures, adjustment of school timetable, interim work arrangements, adjustment of business operations.
    - *Communications plan*: E.g. appoint a contact person, plan communications content and cadence, advice to students/staff/families about support available, 24-hour information line.
- Regularly review the Critical Incident Response Plan.
- Implement the Critical Incident Response Plan, as required.

END OF FIRST DAY CHECKLIST

- ☐ School community members have information on the event.
- ☐ Members of the School community have support contacts and/or helpful information and/or school-organised arrangements for managing stress and emotional reactions.
- ☐ Processes and actions have been planned, implemented and recorded.
- ☐ Critical Incident Response Team has regrouped, debriefed and determined/modified the ongoing Plan.