

Critical Incident Policy

1 Purpose / Legislative and regulatory context (NSW)

This Policy supports the German International School Sydney's (GISS) obligations to provide a safe and supportive environment and maintain policies and procedures to meet NSW non-government school registration requirements, including compliance with relevant notification and reporting requirements.

Depending on the circumstances, a critical incident may also trigger legal duties under work health and safety legislation (including notification of notifiable incidents and preservation of incident sites), child protection mandatory reporting obligations, Reportable Conduct Scheme notifications, privacy/data breach notification requirements, and (where applicable) overseas student/CRICOS obligations

2 Scope and Definition

The German International School Sydney (GISS) is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for all children, staff, volunteers and the community. All staff, volunteers, and contractors are expected to uphold the highest standards of conduct to ensure that children in our care are safe, respected, and valued at all times.

This policy also fulfils the School's obligations as a Reportable Conduct Policy under the Children's Guardian Act 2019.

- 2.1 A Critical Incident** is an unplanned or disruptive event or series of events that significantly affects or could significantly affect the students, parents, staff, operations, assets, financials, community, environment or reputation of the German International School Sydney (**GISS**). Examples include,
- Emergency situations such as fire, siege or bomb threats.
 - Accidents involving serious injury and/or fatalities of a student or staff member.
 - Students lost or injured on an excursion.
 - The death of a child, family member, staff member or carer.
 - Non-Compliance with legal and regulatory requirements.
 - Data leaks or critical ICT solution outages.
 - Violent assaults or harassment, verbal, physical or implied.
 - Events that cause students or staff to experience unusually strong emotional reactions which have the potential to interfere with their ability to function either at the time or when faced with reminders of the situation.

- 2.2 Notifiable incident (WHS):** A workplace death, serious injury/illness, or dangerous incident requiring immediate notification to the WHS regulator.

- 2.3 Reportable allegation / reportable conduct:** An allegation/conviction relating to certain conduct towards a child that must be notified and managed under the NSW Reportable Conduct Scheme.

- 2.4 Eligible data breach:** A data breach involving personal information that is likely to result in serious harm and may require notification to affected individuals and the OAIC (where the Privacy Act applies).
- 2.5 Overseas student critical incident:** A critical incident involving an overseas student may require additional support and documentation as part of overseas student support services.
- 2.6** Each critical incident is unique and is therefore dealt with on an individual basis. The response plans and actions contained in this policy are designed as a guideline to be considered not as a blueprint to be followed in every case.
- 2.7** All GISS staff need to have a very clear understanding of their role and be familiar with their duties as per this policy.
- 2.8** The Principal is responsible
- a. to meet in Term 1 of each school year with all school staff to train all staff and convey the fundamentals of this policy.
 - b. to coordinate a meeting of the Critical Incident Management Team (**CIMT**) in the month following the Annual General Meeting.
- 2.9** The Business Manager is responsible to ensure that
- a. GISS has an up to date fire/emergency evacuation plan that is revised annually and that emergency drills are practised once per term by staff and students.
 - b. GISS has an up to date emergency contact list for all students, parents, staff, board members, police emergency services and relevant authorities.
 - c. The Principal and Deputy Principal have knowledge of location and access to contact lists and evacuation plans.

3 Roles, responsibilities and general requirements

3.1 The **Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)** is responsible to consult on the general direction and key actions of incident management, recovery and business continuity. The CIMT is defined by the Principal depending on the incident and includes at least the following members:

- a. Principal
- b. Head of Secondary School
- c. Head of Primary School
- d. Business Manager
- e. Chairperson of the Board
- f. Board members in charge of communications to Parents and Media
- g. Board members in charge of Health & Safety

3.2 The **Principal is responsible to manage the incident**, including decision making and coordination of all actions (unless requested differently by the board chairperson). The Principal responsibilities include to:

- a. Gather factual information, coordinate CIMT meetings and incident documentation (meeting minutes and key decisions).

- b. Contact relevant authorities as required, which may include NSW Police / emergency services, SafeWork NSW (for WHS notifiable incidents), the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) (child protection), and the Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) (Reportable Conduct Scheme), and (where relevant) Commonwealth agencies (e.g., for overseas students). Contact relevant authorities i.e. Community Services, Workcover, DIAC.
- c. Review the response plans/actions contained in this policy and consider as appropriate to manage the incident.
- d. Assign duties to staff, carers and other adults involved.
- e. Plan/coordinate all communications with students, staff, carers and media.
- f. Have a replacement in place in case he/she is unavailable.

3.3 All media statements and parent communications relating to the critical incident require approval by the Board Chairman and the Board member responsible for media communications.

3.4 If the CIMT decides it requires **legal advice** in relation to the incident the Principal and the Board member for Legal manage the provision of legal advice. All appropriate steps will be taken by the CIMT to maintain the confidentiality of the report and not waive legal professional privilege. In the event that a report is commissioned, that process takes place concurrently with but maybe separate to, and outside of, the incident management.

3.5 When the **incident is closed**,

- a. the Principal will coordinate to have all incident documentation consolidated on a secure filing location.
- b. the Chairman of the board decides, if a post-incident review will occur, including the following as appropriate
 - Have all staff involved complete a report of their role in the crisis.
 - Assessment of what worked well and what areas require improvement (including this policy).
 - Use of external experts/resources.

4 Incident assessment and initiation of incident response

4.1 In the event of a (potential) critical incident the GISS staff:

- a. **Informs the Principal** (or if unavailable the Deputy Principal or Business Manager).
- b. Maintains a calm and efficient manner while caring for and respecting each individual.
- c. Supports those affected by the incident, alerting the CIMT of any individuals perceived to be at risk.

- d. Maintains normal routines as far as is feasible.

4.2 The Principal assesses the situation and decides, if it constitutes a critical incident. In case of a critical incident the Principal immediately:

- a. **Nominates the CIMT** and sets up the first meeting of the CIMT.
- b. Commences to manage the incident.
- c. Informs the board of the critical incident.

4.3 The first meeting of the CIMT shall include the following agenda items

- a. Confirmation of all roles related to the incident
- b. Establish the context: incident, type, location, time, immediate response, injuries/fatalities and impact
- c. Challenge (potential) impact and agree priorities/objectives
- d. Identify response options and agree overall response plan (including business continuity and incident recovery)
- e. Identify legal, regulatory and other requirements
- f. Define tasks, responsibilities and key stakeholders to manage
- g. Define key messages, key milestones and immediate next steps, including next meeting
- h. Keep a record of the meeting and define future record keeping

5 Incident response: Immediate Actions

5.1 Students

- a. Ensure the students are all safe and accounted for.
- b. Administer first aid if necessary.
- c. Defuse the students' emotions with facts – What has happened, how it happened (if known) and explain what other helpers (emergency services) are doing.
- d. Discuss what will happen next.
- e. Advise them if there are going to be changes in their routines.
- f. Let them know when their parents will be picking them up.

5.2 Staff

- a. One staff member to remain at reception to disseminate information to other staff, parents and other concerned people.
- b. Where possible at least 2 staff members will attend the incident.
- c. The PRP and other staff will assume responsibility for any students.
- d. The following tasks should be allocated to staff;
 - Evacuate/administer emergency first aid.
 - Account for all the students. In the event of a student going missing or being taken unlawfully from school, staff members will notify the Principal who will then contact the Police and parents of the student as soon as thorough ground/premises check is completed if such a situation was to arise.

- Contact emergency services.
- Defuse student emotions and provide support for other staff and carers.

5.3 Parents

- a. The parent's initial concern will be for the safety and wellbeing of their children. Where possible:
 - Provide immediate and accurate information to parents of the students closely involved in the critical incidence.
 - Inform them of what staff want them to do – eg: Pick up their child from the school or go directly to the hospital.
 - Give information on when the school routine will return to normal.
 - It is best to explain this also verbally so that the parents have a chance to ask questions.
 - The language needs of parents have to be considered.
 - Next of kin or parent/carer enquiries should be directed to one defined person (for example the Deputy Principal).

5.4 Other stakeholder

- a. Contact police and emergency services as appropriate.
- b. Contact relevant authorities as appropriate.
- c. Consider if/how media might respond to the incident and plan communications and responses to media requests as appropriate.

6 Incident response: Subsequent Actions

6.1 After the immediate threat or crisis is over and the situation has been defused, the emotional consequences of everyone involved need to be catered for.

6.2 Students

- a. Observe and record the students' reactions and behaviour.
- b. Provide opportunities for students to express their feelings – dramatic play, art, small group and individual discussions.
- c. Professional counselling will be offered to those who need it.
- d. Arrange an assembly, if appropriate
- e. Continue familiar routines
- f. Be aware of short term behavioural changes and cater for these accordingly.

6.3 Staff

- a. As soon as practical after the incident arrange a staff get together.
- b. Staff should sit down, gather their thoughts and document the incident, preferably the day of the incident or the next.
- c. Professional counselling will be offered to those who need it.
- d. Compassionate leave may be available. The Principal will consider the needs of staff and students when deciding how many staff will be able

to take leave.

- e. Provide staff with ongoing support through open discussion.
- f. Staff need to be involved in the continued exchange of information to parents and the wider community.

6.4 Parents: Consider developing a special newsletter that gives parents accurate information about the incident, including

- a. Factual information about the incident.
- b. Steps taken.
- c. Reactions by the students and what they have been told.
- d. Arrange a special parent meeting.
- e. Professional counselling will be offered to those who need it.
- f. Give parents information about typical reactions of stress in students.

6.5 Other stakeholders

- a. Contact emergency personnel involved to thank them for their assistance.
- b. Consider if/how media might respond to the incident and plan communications and responses to media requests as appropriate.
- c. Complete insurance reports

7 Notification and reporting obligations

GISS will assess whether a critical incident triggers any mandatory notification or reporting obligations and ensure these are actioned immediately or within required timeframes.

7.1 Emergency services

Call 000 for police/fire/ambulance where there is an immediate threat to life, safety, or property.

7.2 Work Health & Safety (SafeWork NSW) — notifiable incidents

Where an incident is a notifiable incident, GISS must notify SafeWork NSW immediately after becoming aware, by the fastest possible means. The incident site must not be disturbed until an inspector arrives or directs otherwise, except to assist an injured person, remove a deceased person, make the site safe, or support a police investigation. Records of each notifiable incident notification must be retained for at least 5 years

7.3 Child protection — mandatory reporting

Where any staff member has reasonable grounds to suspect a student is at risk of significant harm, and those grounds arise in the course of their work, they must report as soon as practicable in accordance with mandatory reporting requirements.

7.4 Reportable Conduct Scheme (Office of the Children's Guardian)

Where an allegation involves conduct that may constitute reportable conduct, the Head of the Relevant Entity (or delegate) must ensure notification to the Children's Guardian within the prescribed timeframe (generally 7 business days), and investigation/reporting is managed in accordance with scheme requirements.

7.5 Privacy / data breach notification

Where a critical incident involves a suspected data breach, GISS will assess whether the Privacy Act applies and whether the breach is an eligible data breach requiring notification to affected individuals and the OAIC.

7.6 Overseas students (CRICOS)

Where a critical incident involves an overseas student, GISS will implement additional support and documentation steps consistent with the Critical Incident for Overseas Students Policy and Procedure.

Document Management

Policy name	Critical Incident Policy
Version	3.0
School responsible	Principal
Board portfolio	Strategy and Governance
Related documents	Critical Incident for Overseas Students Policy and Procedure Notifications Policy
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