



# Te Aroha College Traumatic Incident Response Policy

## Rationale

Te Aroha College recognises that traumatic incidents - such as sudden deaths, natural disasters, serious accidents, violence and/or threats - can have significant and lasting emotional, psychological and physical effects on students, staff and whanau.

## Purpose

To outline a clear and culturally responsive process to ensure the wellbeing of our school community in the event of such incidents. The procedures are grounded in the **Education and Training Act 2020** which requires schools to provide a safe physical and emotional environment for all students (Section 127 (1)(c)), and are aligned with the Ministry of Education guidelines and relevant examples from other rural and urban New Zealand schools.

## Scope

This policy applies to all individuals on school property, including students, staff, parents, visitors, and contractors.

## Definition of a Traumatic Incident

A traumatic incident is an event that:

- Causes distress to a significant number of students, staff or whanau
- Is beyond the scope of normal experience
- Requires immediate and coordinated action to reduce harm and support recovery.

Examples include:

- Death or serious injury of a student or staff member
- Natural disasters (e.g. flooding, earthquakes)
- Serious accidents on or off site
- Threats to safety (e.g. lockdown situations)
- Incidents involving violence, assault or abuse
- Suicide or suspected suicide

## **Policy Objectives**

1. **Immediate Safety and Security:** Ensure the physical safety of all people on site.
2. **Timely Communication:** Inform relevant parties promptly and accurately.
3. **Culturally Appropriate Response:** Acknowledge the cultural backgrounds and needs of all affected, particularly mana whenua and Maori Whanau.
4. **Psychosocial Support:** Provide access to appropriate emotional and psychological support.
5. **Coordination with External Agencies:** Work with the Ministry of Education's Traumatic Incident Team and other relevant services.
6. **Recovery and Return to Normal:** Support the school community's gradual recovery and return to every day functioning.

## **Responsibilities**

### **Principal**

- Acts as Incident Leader
- Contacts the Ministry of Education Traumatic Incident Team
- Notifies Board Chairperson and Police/Emergency Services if required
- Coordinates internal and external response teams

### **Senior Leadership**

- Implements school-wide procedures
- Ensures appropriate communication with staff, students and whanau
- Assigns staff to care for specific student groups or individuals

### **School Guidance Counsellor/Pastoral Team**

- Provides on-site emotional support
- Refers all students and staff to additional support services
- Maintains confidential records of support provided

### **Board of Trustees**

- Supports the Principal and staff
- Ensure all responses comply with Health and Safety obligations.

## **Review and Training**

- All staff will receive annual training on Trauma Response procedures
- This policy will be reviewed biennially or after any significant incident
- Feedback from students, whanau and staff will inform the review process

## Legislative and Guideline Alignment

This policy complies with:

- **Education and Training Act 2020** Section 127(1)(c) and (d) (wellbeing and health & Safety)
- **Health and Safety at Work Act 2015**
- **Ministry of Education Guidelines:** *Traumatic Incident Response - A Guide for Schools and Early Learning Services*

Date ratified: May 2025

Date of next review: May 2027