



Bereavement Policy

Introduction

There are occasions when a school is touched by the death of a pupil, member of staff or an extended family member. Individuals and families react to bereavement in different ways. The trauma of bereavement can have an effect on the school community. It is important for our school to reflect upon an appropriate response to bereavement and to develop a flexible contingency plan that reflects how Avon House School could or should respond to a tragic situation.

The Head Teacher will be the primary point of contact with a family when a death has occurred. The SLT may consult and seek the assistance of Heads of Houses and Head of Welfare in supporting the bereaved.

The Head Teacher will gather factual information regarding the death and will consult with the family regarding their wishes in sharing of information with the School community. It is important that factual information is shared in a timely manner so that assumptions are not made. It is essential that all staff, including peripatetic staff, are informed as soon as possible, ideally before school children. Children should also be told as soon as possible. This is best done in familiar groups by someone they know, usually a class teacher or Head Teacher. Staff will need to have guidance on words to use and approach to take. Written delivery of the news should be the same day to parents so as to avoid misinformation.

We recognise that there is a range of cultural and religious customs and procedures concerning death and that there may be different expectations of the bereaved child and family. Some of these may affect matters of school organisation. Children will be made aware that there are a range of different responses to bereavement and that we need to value and respect each one of these.

The death of a student or a member of staff

In the case of the death of a pupil appropriate pastoral support should be provided for the whole school community. The Senior Leadership Team, Heads of Houses and Head of Welfare should be deployed appropriately to provide counselling and comfort. This may include pastoral support being available at designated areas and times during the School day. Services of remembrance may be offered at various times. Support for staff who are directly involved with grieving students is important and staff should have the opportunity to meet, to provide an opportunity to share feelings and reactions. The Head Teacher will determine the appropriate period of time for these pastoral supports to continue. If the local press is involved in reporting the death, the Head Teacher will consult with the Chair of Governors regarding an official statement on behalf of the School.

In general it is best to have a minimum of disruption to the School timetable. If a pupil is too upset to attend lessons, they should be excused to go and sit with a designated member of staff in a quiet area. Questions from pupils will be answered factually.



In the case of the death of a member of staff, appropriate pastoral support should be provided for the whole school community. The SLT, Heads of Houses and Head of Welfare should be deployed appropriately to provide counselling and comfort. This may include pastoral support being available at designated areas and times during the School day. Special support including appropriate cover may be needed for staff who worked in the same department, or who were particularly close to the deceased. The Head Teacher will determine the appropriate period of time for these pastoral supports to continue. If the press is involved in reporting on the death, the Head Teacher will consult with The Chair of Governors regarding an official statement on behalf of the School.

The death of a student or member of staff whilst at school or on a school trip

Should the death of a pupil or staff member occur during the School day or on a school trip, the Head Teacher will direct school. The first priority will be to offer support to children and staff who may have witnessed the death and to inform the family of the deceased. The SLT will deal immediately with issues at School including contact with accident and emergency personnel, organising support and counselling for the school community and communicating information to the School community as appropriate. The Head Teacher and or the Chair of Governors will consult with the police and emergency personnel in determining the most appropriate and timely method of informing the immediate family of the death.

The first few days after bereavement in the Preparatory/Pre-Preparatory School

- An emergency staff meeting will be called by the Head Teacher as soon as possible for all staff
- Identify within this meeting key answers that will need to be prepared e.g. facts about an illness
- Details of a whole school assembly will be decided upon and also an act of remembrance taking cultural or religious differences into consideration
- Staff will be identified to carry out different roles in an information sharing pathway lead by the Head Teacher
- A designated place/room will be offered for pupils to see support staff
- Supply staff known to the School will be used if the deceased is a member of staff
- Acknowledge that pupils may have feelings which may emerge in behaviour but that boundaries must stay consistent
- Brentwood Catholic Society who offer counselling to school pupils will be contacted requesting larger involvement in school for supporting those in need

Some normal emotional reactions of pupils to bereavement might be

- Shock/numbness – pupil may not show any immediate reaction as they struggle to absorb the implications of the news. Young children may continue to appear unaffected for sometime



- Denial/disbelief – Initially pupil may find it hard to accept the death – “I can’t believe she is not here” and continue to talk about the dead person in the present tense
- Panic/separation anxiety – pupil may fear own or other’s death, feels vulnerable/world is unsafe
- Sadness – pupil may be tearful /prone to sudden emotional outbursts
- Anger – may be expressed in words or behaviour – signals intense pain and frustration
- Guilt – pupil may feel something they did/said contributed to the death.
- Exhaustion – grief can be physically and emotionally draining – irregular sleeping or eating
- Despair – pupil may feel emotionally overwhelmed, nothing will ever be right again.
- Helplessness – pupil feels out of control of events.
- Regret – for things said/not said, for hopes and wishes that will not now happen
- Loneliness – there is no one else who is experiencing what I am feeling and going through.

Some of the normal physical reactions to bereavement might be

Distress, tiredness, minor illnesses, loss of appetite, self-neglect, decrease in activity, panic attacks, nausea, headaches, feeling cold, dry mouth, shivering, exhaustion, sighing.

Training and Support

www.educare.co.uk (Dealing with Bereavement and Loss online training)

www.childbereavement.org.uk/forschools/supportingabereavedpupil

www.winstonswishwish.org.uk

www.ncb.org.uk

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