



Bereavement Policy

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Responsibility	All staff and the governing body
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Distribution	All staff and governors. Open access to parents via school website and school office

Purpose

It is a sad but necessary task for every school, at one time or another, to address the death of a member of the school community. Bereavement can have a varied effect on individuals and it is important to remember that both staff and students will react in very different ways. The purpose of the Bereavement Policy is to help everyone involved at a time when there may be upset and confusion, ensuring that there is as little disruption as possible affecting the community, and that each member of the school community is supported to help them through a very difficult time.

Aims

This policy has been created to establish a flexible structure for the handling of such an event and establishes how the school will respond when such a tragedy occurs. It is also designed to provide a framework for the pastoral care of the student(s), staff and the school community in the event of loss through bereavement.

When a death occurs

In the event of a death the headteacher, or deputy headteacher in their absence, will be the primary point of contact. Members of the pastoral team may be contacted to consult and help provide support.

Traumatic circumstances

If the death occurs in particularly traumatic circumstances, such as suicide or murder, bereavement support specialists may be utilised such as the following:

- The Samaritans: <http://www.samaritans.org/>
- The Educational Psychology Service
- The Compassionate Friends: <http://www.tcf.org.uk/>

1. Headteacher's role

It is the role of the headteacher to gather factual information regarding the death. They will consult the family of the deceased to ascertain their wishes regarding the sharing of information. This accurate information will be shared quickly so that rumours and assumptions do not spread and cause the family further distress.

The headteacher is also responsible for preparing a letter to parents explaining the event which will be distributed at the end of the school day.

2. The death of a student

a) Informing staff and students

On hearing of the death of a student the Head Teacher should meet immediately with the Senior Leadership Team and Head of Year to plan the school's response. Also, the Vicar/Rector of both Cranfield and Wootton should be informed.

b) Practicalities

- Support will be provided for the whole school community. Pastoral staff may be deployed in counselling roles to provide support and comfort.
- Decisions as to which groups of students should be informed will need to be made, e.g. close friends, form group, friends or brothers and sisters of the deceased.
- As soon as possible the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher should inform all staff about the student's death. Staff should also be given details as to which groups of students will be informed and when and how this is to occur.
- Staff members who are particularly vulnerable should be offered help and support. This should include phone details being exchanged in order to provide a point of contact for the member of staff.
- Staff should be asked to be vigilant and provide immediate information to pastoral staff about students who may be showing signs of stress and need of support. Senior Leadership Team, Pastoral staff and the School Wellbeing Co-ordinator should be made available to offer support. The Educational Psychologist may be brought in to assist.
- The headteacher, in consultation with the chair of governors, will discuss and draft an official statement on behalf of the school should the press be involved.
- The Headteacher should contact the family to offer condolences and support.
- Students with a particularly close relationship to the deceased will be told one-to-one or in a separate group.
- Students will be encouraged to share their feelings and discuss the event and death.
- Staff will be honest and open about their feelings.
- Designated areas may be established to provide students a place to reflect during the day. Students who feel too distressed to attend lessons should be allowed to go to the areas designated.
- It should be strongly emphasised that normal school routine will be maintained as much as possible. Minimum disruption to the school timetable is ideal. Structure and regularity will ensure students are not overwhelmed; however, students who feel too distressed to attend lessons will be allowed to go to the areas designated previously.
- A book of remembrance may be set up in an appropriate location such as the school hall.
- Staff will be provided the opportunity to meet as a group at the end of the school day to discuss any concerns and difficulties and for support.
- The Headteacher will also need to consider a selection process as to which members of staff and which students should attend the funeral. In this matter the wishes of the

family must be taken fully into account. The school should give due consideration to accompanying a small number of close friends to the funeral.

- Should the death be of interest to the media, then the Head Teacher should formulate any response in conjunction with the Local Authority/Diocese Press Officer. It may be necessary to advise staff and students not to speak to the media and to avoid making comments that might be misconstrued.
- The Head of Year will continue to monitor the impact on individual students and keep parents informed of any concerns.
- Parents/family to be invited to any commemorative events held by school.

c) Social networking and the policy

- We will make every effort to handle the event and the communication in a sensitive and efficient manner. It is the school's policy that no information be shared regarding the death using social media by staff or students until the facts have been established and all family members, friends and colleagues have been informed. Respect and empathy are key to ensuring the bereaved do not face unnecessary trauma.

3. The death of a staff member

- Support will be provided for the whole school community. Pastoral staff may be deployed in counselling roles to provide support and comfort.
- On hearing of the death of a member of staff the Headteacher should meet with members of the Senior Leadership Team to plan the school's response. At this meeting the method of informing other staff will be decided. Decisions as to how and when students will be informed will also need to be made.
- The Headteacher should contact the family to offer condolences and support.
- Adequate support for staff and students must be available. The expertise of the Senior Leadership Team, the pastoral staff, School Wellbeing Co-ordinator and the Educational Psychologist should be more than adequate to provide support for students. In general, staff members will be able to support each other, but it may be appropriate to consult the Educational Psychologist to provide more specialist resources.
- Staff should be provided the opportunity to meet as a group at the end of the school day to discuss any concerns and difficulties and for support.
- Staff members with a particularly close relationship to the deceased should be offered specialist support, including appropriate cover if applicable.
- Students with a particularly close relationship to the deceased should be told one-to-one or in a separate group.
- Minimum disruption to the school timetable is ideal. Structure and regularity will ensure students are not overwhelmed. However, flexibility may be required and great sensitivity should be shown when determining how lessons will be covered following the death.
- Attendance of staff and students at the funeral should, where possible, be discussed with the deceased's family.
- The Headteacher should ensure that as many staff as possible are able to attend the funeral. This may involve the school having to put special timetable arrangements in place.
- Heads of Year should continue to monitor the impact on students. The Senior Leadership Team should continue to monitor individual members of staff.
- The Headteacher to be informed of any concerns.
- The family should be involved in any commemorative events held by the school.

- Should the death be of interest to the media, then the Head Teacher should formulate any response in conjunction with the Local Authority/Diocese Press Officer. It may be necessary to advise staff and students not to speak to the media and to avoid making comments that might be misconstrued.
- Designated areas may be established to provide students a place to reflect during the day.
- A book of remembrance may be set up in an appropriate location such as the Library.
- Services of remembrance may be offered.

4. The death of a student's family member

- If the death occurs while the student is at school, it is preferable for a family member of the student (preferably a parent) to come to the school and inform the child.
- If the above is not an option, arrangements will be made to transport the student to their home and family.
- In some circumstances it may be necessary for the student's tutor or the headteacher to inform them.
- The school will liaise with the student's family to determine their wishes before notifying students.
- The student's peers will be informed as to how the student wishes to communicate/respond to the incident. This could be talking openly about the death or asking for respect and privacy, letting the student talk about it in their own time.
- The headteacher will delegate a staff member to liaise with the family regarding their wishes for the funeral and/or the sending of flowers/cards.
- It can be expected that the bereaved student may have a reduced capacity for school work immediately following the death. They will be allowed time to recover and given any extra help and support necessary.
- The Head of Year will co-ordinate the support offered to the student.
- Other students in school should be informed in familiar groups, probably form groups.
- On the first day back, the student should be met by the Head of Year, reassured and made aware of channels of help if they wish to use them, e.g. Form Teacher, Welfare Officer, and where they can go if they need to leave a class.
- A note should be made in their planner to avoid any confusion arising.
- Small group activities with form class members or close friends may be appropriate to help integrate the student back into school.
- The Head of Year will ask parents if teachers who teach the students should discretely acknowledge the death when the student returns. This may be only a few words, but if it doesn't happen the student may think that the teacher does not know, or does not care.
- An individual link person should be provided to support the student when necessary, this may be the Head of Year or a member of staff the student chooses.
- In addition, the student will be offered the support of a school trained bereavement counsellor.
- Should the death be of interest to the media, then the Head Teacher should formulate any response in conjunction with the Local Authority/Diocese Press Officer. It may be necessary to advise staff and students not to speak to the media and to avoid making comments that might be misconstrued.
- The Head of Year will monitor the student over the next few months and will be in regular contact with home.
- Referrals to outside agencies will be considered and discussed with the parents e.g. Educational Psychologist, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

- On the anniversary of the death, as this will be a particularly vulnerable time, the Head of Year will contact the parent/guardian and if deemed appropriate will then see the student.

5. The death of a student or staff member on a school trip

- In the event of a death during a school trip an emergency management team will be established by the headteacher.
- Those who have witnessed the death will be the priority and they will be offered support.
- The headteacher will consult with emergency personnel to determine the most timely and appropriate method for informing the deceased's family.
- A designated staff member will undertake the role of school liaison, and if possible, a designated phone line for enquiries will be established.
- Should the death be of interest to the media, then the Head Teacher should formulate any response in conjunction with the Local Authority/Diocese Press Officer. It may be necessary to advise staff and students not to speak to the media and to avoid making comments that might be misconstrued.
- The emergency management team will organise support and counselling as necessary.

6. Examinations/assessments

- Bereavement can have serious effects of a student's ability to study and undertake examinations and assessments. The school is mindful of this and the following considerations will be made to assist students.

Students currently taking examinations or assessments

- Students who are taking examinations during a time of bereavement are likely to be affected by the loss.
- The circumstances will be reported to the appropriate examination board and they will decide on where special considerations will be applied. A maximum of five percent consideration can be made to amend their result.
- The relationship between the student and the person concerned will be a determining factor in the examination board's decision as will the proximity to the exam from the death.

Students missing examinations or assessments

- This will be a very rare occurrence but provision will be in place will it occur. If a student misses an examination due to the death of a close family member or friend it will be reported to the appropriate examination board.
- The examination board will then make a decision based on the information provided by the school, as to whether or not to apply special consideration and amend their result – this may mean the use of the student's predicted grade.

7. Funerals

- The school will always abide by the family's wishes.
- The family will often welcome the involvement of the school community in the funeral but, there will be times where the family wishes to keep the proceedings private and this will be respected.

- If the family wishes the school to be represented at the funeral the headteacher, in collaboration with the Senior Leadership Team, will identify which staff and students may attend.
- Practicalities such as providing cover for teachers will also be arranged.
- The headteacher will consult the family and, in turn, staff and students in determining the appropriate sending of flowers, cards or the holding of a collection.
- A permanent form of remembrance may also be considered.

8. Review

- This policy will be reviewed by the headteacher in February 2022.
- All members of staff are required to familiarise themselves with all processes and procedures outlined in this policy as part of their induction programme.
- After a bereavement, the school will review what was done at each stage and will evaluate the actions taken to enable the school to plan for the future.

Other Related Policies

Behaviour for Learning Policy

Safeguarding Policy

Links

The Samaritans <http://www.samaritans.org/>

The Educational Psychology Service (contactable through the school)

Compassionate Friends <http://www.tcf.org.uk/>