

BEREAVEMENT POLICY

Primary person responsible for updates to this policy: James Kidd

Job title: Vice Principal (Pastoral)

Last review date: July 2021

Next review date: July 2022

Circulation: This policy has been adopted by the governors and is available to parents on request. It is addressed to all members of staff and volunteers and applies wherever they are working with children.

'Parents' refers to parents, guardians and carers.

Introduction and Background:

From time to time every School & College is touched by the death of a student, member of staff or an extended family member. Individuals and families react to bereavement in their own unique ways. The trauma of bereavement can have a profound effect on the College community. So it is important for the College to consider an appropriate response to bereavement and to develop flexible contingency plans that reflect how the college could or should respond in a tragic situation.

When a death occurs:

The Principal, or when unavailable the Vice Principal (Pastoral) will be the primary point of contact with a family when a death has occurred. The Principal may consult and seek the assistance of Tutors, Housemasters & Housemistresses (HMs) and College Nurse and other wellbeing staff in supporting the bereaved.

The Principal will gather factual information regarding the death and will consult with the family regarding their wishes in sharing the information with the College community. It is important that factual information is shared in a timely manner so that assumptions and rumours are not spread, as they can only add to the family's distress. It is essential that all staff are informed straight away, ideally before students. Students should be told as soon as possible. This is best done in familiar groups by someone they know. Staff will need to have guidance on words to use and approach to take. Staff are encouraged to seek to identify students who may be particularly vulnerable or likely to experience PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). For example, someone who may have witnessed the death may require special attention.

The death of a student:

In the case of the death of a student appropriate pastoral support should be provided for the whole College community. The Executive Leadership Team (ELT), Senior Leadership Team (SLT), College Nurse and other pastoral staff should be deployed appropriately to provide support and comfort. This may include pastoral support being available at designated areas and times during the College day. Generally a book of remembrance should be set up in an appropriate location where the bereaved can come to express their grief and loss. 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 together at the end of the College day, to provide an opportunity to share feelings and reactions. The Principal will determine the appropriate period of time for pastoral support to continue. If the press is involved in reporting on the death, the Principal will follow the College Media Protocol. In general it is best to have a minimum of disruption to the College timetable. The structure and regularity of the College day is important to maintain, but some flexibility may be required. If a student is too upset to attend lessons, they should be excused to go to one of the Medical Rooms.

The death of a member of staff:

In the case of the death of a member of staff, appropriate pastoral support should be provided for the whole College community. The ELT, SLT, College Nurse and other wellbeing staff should be deployed appropriately to provide support and comfort. This may include pastoral support being available at designated areas and times during the College day. Generally a book of remembrance should be set up in an appropriate location where the bereaved can come to express their grief and loss. Services of remembrance may be offered at various times. 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 Principal will determine the appropriate period of time for these pastoral support to continue. If the press is involved in reporting on the death, the Principal will follow the College Media Protocol. In general it is best to have a minimum of disruption to the College timetable. The structure and regularity of the College day is important to maintain, but some flexibility may be required. Great sensitivity and care will need to be taken in determining how lessons will be covered immediately following the death.

Funeral Procedure:

When a funeral has been planned for the deceased, it is essential that the College is sensitive to the family's culture and abides by the family's wishes. The family may welcome involvement of members of the College community but equally, may wish to keep the funeral private. The Principal, in consultation with the ELT & SLT, will identify which staff and students may want to attend and the practicalities of issues such as staff cover and transport. The Principal will also consult with staff and students in determining what is appropriate in terms of sending flowers, a collection and/or any further more permanent remembrance.

Boarding Bereavement:

In the case of the death of a student in the boarding community appropriate pastoral support should be provided for the whole College community. The ELT, SLT, Boarding Staff and College Nurse and other wellbeing staff should be deployed appropriately to provide support and comfort. This may include pastoral support being available at designated areas and times during the College day and throughout the rest of the day and at night. At an appropriate time the boarding community should be brought together for a time of remembrance to be planned and conducted by the Vice Principal (Boarding) and members of the Boarding staff. Generally, a book of remembrance should be set in an appropriate part of the boarding house where the bereaved can come to express their grief and loss. Support for Boarding staff who are directly involved with grieving students is important and staff should have the opportunity to meet at designated times to share feelings and reactions. The Principal, in consultation with the Boarding Team, will determine the appropriate period of time for this pastoral support to continue. If the press is involved in reporting on the death, the Principal will follow the College Media Protocol. In general it is best to have a minimum of disruption to the boarding routine. The structure and regularity of meals, free-time and study are important to maintain, but some flexibility may be required.

The Principal, Vice Principal (Boarding) and Vice Principal (Pastoral) will take primary responsibility in consulting with the police and emergency personnel in determining the most appropriate and timely method of informing the local guardians and parents. In the case of foreign boarders they will consult with the local guardian regarding the details of local funeral arrangements. They will also consult with the family regarding an appropriate Memorial Service to be held for the College community.

The death of a family member of a student:

In the case of the death of a family member of a student, if the death happens while the student is at College, a representative for the family, preferably a parent should come to the College to inform the student. In some circumstances it may be necessary for the tutor to give the death notification. Before notifying fellow students, the College should speak with the bereaved student's family to determine what information should be given to classmates. Classmates should be informed how the bereaved classmate wants to talk about what has happened (i.e. speak openly and take initiative, or let the bereaved student decide when to talk about the death.)

The Vice Principal (Pastoral) and a HM should consult with the bereaved student's family to determine what is appropriate in terms of classmates attending the funeral and/or sending flowers. Following the death of a family member it can be expected that the bereaved student may have a reduced capacity for College work. The bereaved student may need extra help at a later time, when working capacity becomes normal again.

The death of a student or member of staff while at College or on a College trip:

Should the death of a student or staff member occur during the College day or on a College trip the Principal will quickly assemble an emergency meeting of the ELT. The first priorities will be to offer support to students and staff who may have witnessed the death and to inform the family of the deceased. The Vice Principal (Pastoral) and the ELT will deal immediately with issues at the College including contact with accident and emergency personnel, organising support and counselling for the College community and communicating information to the College

community as appropriate. The Principal will consult with the police and emergency personnel in determining the most appropriate and timely method of informing the immediate family of the death.

External Support and advice

Bereavement Advice Centre

Helpline: 0800 634 9494. Supports bereaved people on a range of practical issues via a single freephone number. It offers advice on all aspects of bereavement from registering the death and finding a funeral director through to probate, tax and benefit queries.

Bereaved Partners Support Group

Support group for people who lose their loved ones to cancer. The aim of the group is to create a regular space for people to share stories and experiences with others who have experienced a similar kind of loss – a place for them to talk, listen, or just be.

The Compassionate Friends

Helpline: 0845 123 2304; email: info@tcf.org.uk. An organisation of bereaved parents and their families offering understanding, support and encouragement to others after the death of a child or children. The helpline is always answered by a bereaved parent who is there to listen when you need someone to talk to; you can also email the helpline: helpline@tcf.org.uk.

Child Bereavement

A national charity which helps grieving families and the professionals who care for them. Support and Information Line: 01494 568900.

Cruse Bereavement Care

Helpline: 0844 477 9400; email: helpline@cruse.org.uk. Exists to promote the well-being of bereaved people and to enable anyone bereaved by death to understand their grief and cope with their loss. Provides counselling and support and offers information, advice, education and training services.

Dying matters

This website has been created primarily for people approaching the end of their life, and their carers, relatives and friends. It will also be of interest to anyone thinking about what they want for their own end of life, including information on coping with bereavement.

National Association of the Widowed

Tel: 0845 838 2261. The National Association of Widows is a national charity offering support and friendship to widows, and providing opportunities for women to develop a new sense of purpose as they face life on their own.

Samaritans

Helpline: 08457 90 90 90; (Ireland): 116 123; e-mail: jo@samaritans.org. National organisation offering support to those in distress who feel suicidal or despairing and need someone to talk to. The telephone number of your local branch can be found in the telephone directory. Samaritans also provides a widely used e-mail service (not a chatroom but they endeavour to answer within 24 hours).

Survivors Of Bereavement by Suicide (SOBS)

National Helpline 0300 111 5065. SOBS is a self-help, voluntary organisation. Many of those helping have, themselves, been bereaved by suicide.

Source: www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinfoforall/problems/bereavement/bereavement.aspx