

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

From time to time every college is touched by the death of a student, parent, member of staff or an extended family member. Individuals and families react to bereavement in their own very unique ways. The trauma of bereavement can have a profound effect on the college community. Therefore, it is important for a college to reflect upon 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

Our 'Student Services Department' will be notified and one of our 'Learning Mentors' **Neil Davidson or Liz Bellman** will act as 'Co-coordinator', and will be the primary point of contact with a family when a death has occurred.

- They will inform Mrs. McAlister (Deputy Head Teacher and Safeguarding Lead), and may consult and seek the assistance of other members of the pastoral staff in supporting the bereaved.
- The Learning Mentors 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 essential that all staff are informed straight away and will be given 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.
- Students should be told as soon as possible. This is best done in familiar groups by someone they know e.g. Form tutors
- Letters may be sent home. The contents of the letter and the distribution list must be agreed by the parents/carers and college. See Appendix 1 and Appendix 2

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 Learning Mentors and other pastoral staff should be deployed appropriately to provide counselling and comfort.
- This may include pastoral support being available at designated areas and times during the college day.
- 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 in an agreed meeting room at the end of the college day, to provide an opportunity to share feelings and reactions.

- The Learning Mentors will determine the appropriate period of time for these pastoral supports to continue.
- If the press are involved in reporting on the death, the Learning Mentors will consult with Mrs. McAlister and together they will inform staff regarding an official statement on behalf of the college.

DEATH OF A PARENT/CARER OR CLOSE FAMILY MEMBER

Learning Mentors will liaise with the family supporting the student and inform staff and students according to the family's wishes.

- The student will be offered pastoral support within college and access to bereavement support as required.
- In all incidences the structure and regularity of the college day is important to maintain, however some flexibility may be required. If a student is too upset to attend lessons, they should be excused to go to an appropriate space.
- The Learning Mentor will direct the appropriate recognition of sympathy in accordance with the family's faith and culture on behalf of the college.

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.

- Appropriate support and counselling will be available for all the college community. This may include pastoral support being available at designated areas and times during the college day.
- 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.
- If the press are involved in reporting on the death the Headship team will prepare an official statement on behalf of the school.

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 Senior Leadership Team, will identify which staff and students may want to attend and the practicalities of issues such as staff cover and transport.

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 an emergency management team will be called.

- 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.
- Mrs. McAlister and the emergency management team 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.
- Mrs. McAlister will consult with the police and emergency personnel in determining the most appropriate and timely method of informing the immediate family of the death.

APPENDIX 1

TEMPLATE OF A LETTER INFORMING PARENTS OF THE DEATH OF A STUDENT

Before sending a letter home to parents about the death of a student, permission must be gained from the child's parents.

The contents of the letter and the distribution list must be agreed by the parents and school.

<Address>

<Date>

Dear Parents

Your child's class teacher/Form Tutor/ Head of Year had the sad task of informing the children of the death of <Name>, a student in <Year>.

<Name> died from Sadly <Name> had been ill for a long time and died peacefully at home yesterday. He/She was a very popular member of the class and will be missed by everyone who knew him/her.

When someone dies it is normal for their friends and family to experience lots of different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try to answer their questions at college but if there is anything more that you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to telephone the school office and we would be more than happy to help you.

We will be arranging a memorial service in the college in the next few months as a means of celebrating <Name..'s> life.

Yours sincerely

APPENDIX 2

TEMPLATE OF A LETTER INFORMING PARENTS OF THE DEATH OF A MEMBER OF STAFF

<Address>

<Date>

Dear Parents

Your child's class teacher/Form Tutor/Head of Year had the sad task of informing the children of the tragic death of <Name> who has been a teacher at this school for a number of years. Our thoughts are with <Name>'s family at this time and, in an effort to try to respond to his/her death in a positive way, all the children have been informed.

When someone dies it is normal for family and friends to experience many different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion, and young people are likely to ask questions about the death that need to be answered honestly and factually in terms that they will understand.

The students have been told that their teachers are willing to try and answer their questions at college but if there is anything else you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to telephone the college office and we will be more than happy to help you.

Yours sincerely