



HAZLEGROVE

Deo Juvante

BEREAVEMENT POLICY

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

From time to time every school is touched by the death of a pupil, member of staff or an extended family member. The trauma of bereavement can have a profound effect on the school community, so it is important that Hazlegrove is prepared to respond appropriately to bereavement.

THE TEAM INVOLVED IN BREAKING THE NEWS TO STAFF, PUPILS AND FAMILIES

The Head/Deputy Head will usually be the primary point of contact with a family where a death has occurred which will affect the school community widely, such as the death of a pupil or member of the school staff. The Head or other nominated contact will always consult with the family in the first place regarding the family's wishes in sharing the information with the School community. It is important that factual information is shared in a timely manner so that assumptions and rumour are not spread.

In cases of extended family members of children or staff, that contact will more frequently be a child's tutor or Houseparent or, in the case of staff, the Head or another trusted colleague, any of whom will liaise appropriately and help the child or staff member to realise their wishes about communication with others.

BREAKING SAD NEWS TO STAFF, PUPILS AND FAMILIES

Ideally staff will be informed before pupils. Pupils should be informed by the Heads of Section / Houseparents / Class Teacher (Pre-Prep). These staff will need to have guidance on words to use and the approach to take and reference can be made to fact sheets produced by Child Bereavement UK on 'How to respond to a Death'. <https://www.childbereavementuk.org> The guiding principles are to avoid euphemisms such as 'passed' or 'lost' with the children but to use clear language, be sensitive, give only verified and simple factual information, and express sadness. Staff are encouraged to seek to identify in advance pupils who may be particularly vulnerable or likely to be distressed. It is then helpful for all staff to be aware of what the children have been told.

Any need to communicate with the wider parent body about the death and about what the children have been told, will be managed by the Head / Deputy Head, usually on the same day as the communication with the children.

If the press is involved the Head will be the first and only point of contact and he will, if necessary, write an official statement on behalf of the School. Training for all key pastoral staff may need to take place including Matrons, the Surgery and Resident Tutors.

THE DEATH OF A PUPIL

In the case of the death of a pupil appropriate pastoral support should be provided for the whole School community in the first days following the incident. The Foundation Chaplain, Heads of Section, House Parents, and other key members of staff should be deployed appropriately to provide support and a listening ear. This may include pastoral support being available at designated areas and times during the school day and if appropriate, through the evening.

As support, staff should have the opportunity to meet in the Common Room at the end of each School day in the immediate aftermath, to be able to share feelings and reactions. Key staff may need to be relieved of teaching and duties if they are needed to support affected pupils and their families. On-going communication with the Head is important to ensure all those involved are aware of the situation as it evolves over time. Copies of 'Looking After Yourself' and 'Supporting Bereaved Pupils' fact sheets produced by Child Bereavement UK will be made available by the Deputy Head. The Child Bereavement UK Helpline can also offer support (0800 02 888 40).

The Head, in consultation with the Heads of Section, Houseparents, the Foundation Chaplain, and other key staff, will determine the appropriate period of time for these pastoral supports to continue. In general, it is best to have a minimum of disruption to the school timetable. The structure and regularity of the school day is important to maintain, but some flexibility may be required. If a pupil is too upset to attend lessons, they should be excused to go to the nurse, their boarding house or a designated safe space if appropriate adult supervision is available.

THE DEATH OF A STAFF MEMBER

In addition to the above, special support, including appropriate cover, may be needed for staff who worked in the same department or who were particularly close to the deceased. In general, it is best to have a minimum of disruption to the School timetable. 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 school is sensitive to the family's culture and abides by the family's wishes. A guidance sheet produced by Child Bereavement UK on 'Different Cultures and Beliefs' will be made available if appropriate by the Deputy Head. The family may welcome involvement of members of the School community but, equally, may wish to keep the funeral private. The Head, in consultation with the Deputy Head, will identify which staff and pupils may want to attend and the practicalities of issues such as staff cover and transport. The Head will also consult with the Foundation chaplain, staff and pupils, in determining what is appropriate in terms of sending flowers, a collection and/or any more permanent remembrance.

REMEMBRANCE

A book of remembrance may be set up, in accordance with family wishes, in an appropriate location where the bereaved can come to express their grief and loss. A service of remembrance may take place. Other memorials may be considered, and appropriate memorialisation activities may be discussed with the Leadership Team, PLT and other key staff. The deceased's family will be consulted through every stage of the planning for this.

In general, it is best to have a minimum of disruption to the School and boarding routine. The structure and regularity of meals, free-time and study are important to maintain, but some flexibility may be required.

THE DEATH OF A FAMILY MEMBER OF A PUPIL

In some circumstances, for pupils who are a long way from home, it may be necessary for the child to be informed of the death by a member of staff that the child has a close relationship with unless this can wait to be managed by a family member. Before notifying fellow pupils, the Head should visit the bereaved pupil's family or speak with them on the telephone to determine what information should be given to other pupils and what is appropriate with regard to members of the school community attending the funeral and sending flowers etc. Other pupils should be informed how their bereaved friend 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). It is also helpful for other pupils to know that grief may not show itself in the ways they expect, and to understand what it might look like.

Following the death of a family member it can be expected that the bereaved pupil may have a reduced capacity for schoolwork. The bereaved pupil may need extra help at a later time, when working capacity normalises.

THE DEATH OF A PUPIL OR MEMBER OF STAFF WHILE AT SCHOOL OR ON A SCHOOL TRIP

Should the death of a pupil or member of staff occur during the School day or on a school trip, the Head will quickly assemble the Leadership Team and they will refer to the Crisis Management Procedure. The Head will consult with the police and emergency personnel in determining the most appropriate and timely method of informing the immediate family of the death.

TRANSITIONS

As the impact of the bereavement will follow pupils throughout school life, information will be shared appropriately at key transition points.