

4.05 Bereavement Plan

- a) For use in the event of the death, e.g. of a pupil or member of staff. Each individual case will be different and it is impossible to create a plan for every possible scenario. Each case will therefore need to be carefully considered in the light of the circumstances pertaining. The following may be utilised if appropriate, but should be regarded as a checklist of possible responses to bereavement.
- b) In the event of the death of a pupil or member of staff, the school will immediately inform the Director, People Department.

c) The Family of the Deceased

- In addition the school will consider how to deal with the family of the deceased, working with the Police Family Liaison Officer, the staff, pupils, parents/carers and the wider school community where appropriate.
- The school will immediately establish a line of communication with the family of the deceased, and agree with the family whether and what information can be released about how the person died and what happened. (Via the Police Family Liaison Officer if appropriate)



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- The school will immediately establish a line of communication with the family of the deceased, and agree with the family whether and what information can be released about how the person died and what happened. (Via the Police Family Liaison Officer if appropriate)
- The school will also consult with the family about what the school is doing and will respect the wishes of the family concerning any arrangements including involvement by the family. In the same way the school will respect the wishes of the family about involvement by the school in any arrangements being made by the family e.g. for the funeral.
- Where the deceased or their family are from a minority or ethnic group, the school will ensure that staff understand and are sensitive to their cultural needs. Responses to death and the beliefs and rituals surrounding it vary across different cultures and religions. Teachers and professionals need to be ware of these differences, which include dress, hair, food, emotional reaction and funeral customs. What may seem disrespectful in one culture may be a mark of respect in another. This could be incorporated into teaching and learning so that children as well as staff are respectful of these differences.

- In the case of the death of a member of staff, the school will liaise with the LA Head of HR in respect of pension entitlements for the family of the deceased. The HR team will also deal with the necessary correspondence including a letter from the Director to the family of the deceased where this is appropriate.

e) Teaching staff

- Will be notified and may also need to be briefed about what the school is doing, take time to prepare themselves to handle questions from pupils and parents/carers, and to monitor pupils for any signs of emotional trauma.
- Arrangements will also be made to notify ancillary staff such as nursery, admin, catering and cleaning staff etc at the appropriate time in an appropriate way. Staff may themselves be affected by the bereavement, and the Headteacher will talk to them collectively and individually over the coming days/weeks/months, monitor them, and ensure they receive the necessary support if they are unable to cope e.g. bereavement counsellors, obtainable via the LA Head of HR. The Chair of Governors and governing body may also have a role in monitoring the Headteacher and staff for signs of stress.

f) Children and Young People

- It is important for the school to carefully manage the way the news is given to pupils, which will be in a controlled way. Time will be taken to plan how to break the news to pupils, what to say, and who will say it. Ideally this will be by the Headteacher at morning assembly followed up by class time in tutor groups.
- Pupils will need to be told what has happened and how everyone is feeling about it. It may also be appropriate to tell them why it happened, and younger pupils may need to be re-assured that it will not happen again, and it will not happen to them.
- It may be necessary to explain to pupils that the school is grieving/mourning the loss of the individual, what this means, how this makes us feel, that this is a natural process we all go through, what will be happening in school because of this, and how they can participate.
- It may be important for pupils, and especially younger pupils, to then be with the teachers and staff who they are familiar with so that they can feel safe to talk and share about how they feel about what has happened.
- This follow-up time is important to enable teachers to provide reassurance, answer individual questions and provide guidance to the class group about how they should be feeling, that it is alright to feel sad, or not to feel sad, and how to respond to what has happened. Bereavement is a normal part of human experience and while it may be very sad, it is important not to over-play it, or make pupils feel traumatised or distressed.
- Pupils may also need some practical way to focus how they feel about what has happened, and the school can provide ways to do this, e.g. writing cards, making floral tributes, planting a tree of remembrance, a plaque, a book of condolence, a book of remembrance, a special assembly, a memorial service etc.

- An appropriate quiet area could be set-aside in the school for pupils to come to talk to staff about what has happened. The school will take advice from the LA Principal Education Psychologist when planning how to handle the pupils in this situation.

g) Parents/Carers

- The Headteacher may need to write a letter to parents/carers to inform them about what has happened and concerning any arrangements that have been made.
- If the deceased is a member of staff, parents/carers may need to know what arrangements the school is making to provide staff to cover their classes.
- In addition the Headteacher and staff may need to make themselves available before/after school for parents/carers and others to talk to. A follow up letter may be required to notify parents/carers about subsequent events and arrangements e.g. special assembly, memorial service etc.

h) The Wider School Community

- The wider school community will also need to be notified and involved in an appropriate way. They may also be able to provide useful support e.g. the PTA, extended school providers, early years providers, voluntary organisations, local churches, faith groups etc. and anyone who has links with the school. The school website and newsletter could also be used to carry the news.



i) Cards, Flowers & Gifts

- In cases of bereavement many people may feel the need to express their feelings about what has happened, by sending cards, flowers, money or other items to the school, unless they are specifically told not to.
- Cards could be put on a special pin board/display, forwarded to the family of the bereaved or included in a book of condolence or a book of remembrance. They will not be thrown away because this might hurt the sender's feelings.
- The school may need to designate a suitable place for people to put flowers where they are visible and can be perused. It may be appropriate to make them into a floral tribute, but ensure that flowers that may arrive later can also be included otherwise people may feel excluded.
- Pupils could help with displaying/arranging the flowers. Remember flowers will quickly perish without water, and even with water flowers may wilt and become unattractive in time.
- But disposal of flowers may also be a contentious issue, and they will not be just thrown away. The school may need to adopt a policy for this e.g. the flowers to be used at the funeral, or taken to the cemetery, or another appropriate location

at an appropriate time. This may be an opportunity to discard any wilted stems, remake the floral tribute or make them into wreaths.

- The small cards sent with the flowers may also contain written messages, and these could be forwarded to the family of the bereaved or included in a book of condolence or a book of remembrance.
- Items such as toys or photographs could also be forwarded to the family of the bereaved or included in a book of condolence or a book of remembrance.
- Books of condolence or remembrance could be forwarded to the bereaved family at an appropriate time.
- N.B. the family of the bereaved may not want to be bombarded with cards, flowers or other items, so the school will always ask first before forwarding these to the family.
- A clear written record of any money received and donors will be maintained by the school, and the money will be used for the purpose for which it was given. Money given for the family of the deceased will be passed on to them or donated to a charity instead if they prefer, and the school will respect their wishes. In the case of multiple bereavements the school will carefully consider a policy on how such money will be distributed. The school will take specialist advice if it is considering setting up charitable trusts.



j) Counselling Support

- It will generally not be necessary to provide help-lines for counselling in respect of a single bereavement, however this may be appropriate in respect of multiple fatalities or where the incident involved violence.
- Where individual pupils or staff appear to be more seriously affected, bereavement counselling assistance can be obtained from the LA Head of HR, and the LA Principal Education Psychologist.
- The school may also consider seeking help and advice from appropriate external organisations.
- Please refer also the sections below on Communicating, and Recovery.

k) Business Continuity

- Where the deceased is a member of staff the school may also need to make arrangements for other staff to cover their classes, arrange for temporary or supply teachers, and for making a new appointment to the post. The LA Head of HR can also assist with this.
- Neighbouring schools may respond sympathetically to requests for assistance if needed. Reciprocal arrangements with neighbouring schools should be explored and agreed as part of this Emergency Plan.