



**BEREAVEMENT POLICY**  
**FOR**

**PRIORY INTEGRATED COLLEGE**  
**HOLYWOOD**

To be reviewed 2014

# BEREAVEMENT POLICY

## Introduction

From time to time every school 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 very unique ways. The trauma of bereavement can have a profound effect on the school community. It is important for us at Priory Integrated College to reflect upon an appropriate response to the death of a member of our school community or of a relative of a pupil or member of staff. The following are flexible contingency plans that reflect how we could or should respond in a tragic situation.

## When a death occurs;

The Principal, and in his absence the Vice Principal, will be the primary point of contact with a family when a death has occurred.

The Principal will gather all factual information regarding the death and will consult with the family regarding their wishes in sharing the information with the School community. The Principal will suggest that pupils should be told in familiar surroundings by their Class Tutor. It is important that factual information is shared in a timely manner so that assumptions and rumour are not spread, as they can only add to the family's distress.

The Principal will then inform all staff straight away, ideally before pupils. Pupils should be told as soon as possible. This will be done in tutor groups by the Class Tutor or in a way that has been specifically requested by the family.

Staff guidance on what words to use and approach to take are included in this policy. Teachers should seek to identify pupils within their class who may be particularly vulnerable, for example, someone who has had a recent bereavement or may be particularly close to the person who has died.

If necessary and with the families permission the Principal may draft a letter to parents/carers to inform them of the situation forwarding the advice leaflets included in the appendix to this policy.

## The death of a student:

In the case of the death of a student pastoral support will be provided for the whole school community.

The Senior leadership team, School Counselling team, Family Works counsellors as well as other pastoral staff should be deployed appropriately to provide counselling and comfort. Assistance may be obtained from the South Eastern Education and Library boards counselling team if required.

The Principal will decide where and when the pastoral support will be made available during the School day.

The Principal will decide if a book of remembrance should be set up in an appropriate location where the bereaved can come to express their grief and loss.

An assembly of remembrance will be arranged by the Principal at a pre-arranged time. Support for staff who are directly involved with grieving students is important and staff should have the opportunity to meet at the end of the School day, to provide an opportunity to share

feelings and reactions. The Principal will determine the appropriate period of time for these pastoral supports to continue.

If the press are involved in reporting on the death, the Principal will consult with the Vice Principal and if required the Chair of the Board of Governors regarding an official statement on behalf of the School.

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 any pupil is too upset to attend lessons, they should be excused to see an available school counsellor.

### **The death of a member of staff:**

In the case of the death of a member of staff pastoral support will be provided for the whole school community.

The Senior leadership team, School Counselling team, Family Works counsellors as well as other pastoral staff should be deployed appropriately to provide counselling and comfort. Assistance will be obtained from the South Eastern Education and Library boards counselling team to assist with the needs and requirements of both pupils and members of staff.

The Principal will decide where and when the pastoral support will be made available during the School day.

An assembly of remembrance will be arranged by the Principal at a pre-arranged time. Support for staff who are directly involved with grieving students is important and staff should have the opportunity to meet at the end of the School day, to provide an opportunity to share feelings and reactions. The Principal will determine the appropriate period of time for these pastoral supports to continue.

If the press are involved in reporting on the death, the Principal will consult with the Vice Principal and if required the Chair of the Board of Governors regarding an official statement on behalf of the School.

In general we will attempt to have the minimum of disruption to the school timetable as possible. The structure and regularity of the school 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 school is sensitive to the family's culture and abides by the family's wishes. The family may welcome involvement of members of the school community but equally, may wish to keep the funeral private. The Principal will liaise with the bereaved family and will follow their wishes.

The Principal will then identify which staff and pupils may want to attend and the practicalities of issues such as staff cover and transport. The Principal will also consult with staff and pupils in determining what is appropriate in terms of sending flowers, a collection and/or any further more permanent remembrance.

## **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 child is at school, a representative for the family, preferably a parent should come to the school to inform the child.

In some circumstances it may be necessary for a member of staff to give the death notification. When this is required the Principal will decide which two members of staff should notify the pupil.

Before notifying fellow pupils, the Principal will speak with the bereaved pupil's family to determine what information should be given to classmates. Pupils should be informed how the bereaved pupil 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 Principal will consult with the bereaved student's family to determine what is appropriate in terms of pupils attending the funeral and/or sending flowers. Following the death of a family member it can be expected that the bereaved pupil may have difficulty concentrating on school work or difficulties readjusting to school life. The bereaved pupil 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 school or on a school trip:**

Should the death of a student or staff member occur during the School day or on a school trip the Principal will quickly assemble the Senior Leadership Team. 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 team will deal immediately with issues at the School including contact with accident and emergency personnel, organising support and counselling for the school community and communicating information to the school 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.

***In all cases of possible media involvement the Principal/Chairperson of the board of Governors will seek advice from appropriate agencies and involved families before a statement is provided.***

## The student's view.

It is important to understand the needs of pupils when bereavement occurs. Recent meetings with these pupils have given us an insight to their wants and needs;

Pupils say...

- Inform other teachers, especially supply teachers about my loss although I may not wish to talk to them about it. Keep this on record.
- Talk to me about what has happened. I may need more information, advice and education about loss.
- Arrange for me to get extra help with my work so I don't get behind, especially before exams.
- Realise that I have a lot on my plate. Try not to put the spotlight on me too much. I will participate when I can.
- Help me to cope by treating me the same as everyone else.
- Let me know about groups for children and young people who are also coping with loss and change.
- Ask me how I am feeling. It may not be obvious.
- Give me a note that allows me permission to leave class briefly, without having to explain myself if I feel overwhelmed.
- Understand that I will not 'get over it' or 'put it behind me' but with time I will learn to cope with all the changes.
- Give me extra encouragement for all the things I am managing to do and keep me in mind.
- Find a way of getting my attention back in class, without others noticing and making me embarrassed.
- Wait until I am ready to talk.
- Remember that I am still me, just feeling a bit lost at the moment.
- Help me to find new dreams of the future and make plans.

# SUDDEN DEATH

## Information sheet for Pupils/Young People

You have experienced a tragic event that has been very upsetting for you. It is unlikely that you have experienced such an event before and so you may never be faced with such reactions.

Even though this event is over, life has changed for you. Someone close to you has died. You are likely experiencing strong reactions to it. It is very normal for young people to be upset after such a loss. The signs and symptoms of your reaction will likely last for some time.

The understanding and help from your parents, teachers and friends can help you come to terms with what has happened and help you with some of these feelings and reactions. Sometimes this might be a bit more difficult and you might need more help. This does not mean that anything is wrong with you. It only means that this traumatic event is just too powerful for you to deal with on your own.

Here are some of the common reactions to such an event. You may have experienced some of these:

| <b>THINKING</b>  | <b>FEELING</b>   |
|--|--|
| Confused<br>Nightmares/bad dreams<br>Poor concentration<br>Mental Turmoil<br>Negative thinking<br>Not interested in what is going on<br>Spending a lot of time thinking of what happened | Worried<br>Guilty<br>Angry<br>Sad<br>Easily upset<br>Irritable<br>Overwhelmed<br>Panicky |

| <b>BEHAVIOURS</b>  | <b>PHYSICAL COMPLAINTS</b>   |
|--|--|
| Loss of appetite<br>Being very quiet<br>Jumpy<br>Being quarrelsome/arguing | Feeling tired all the time<br>Unable to rest or settle<br>Feeling sick/knot in tummy<br>Cold and shivery |

## REMEMBER

- Everyone experiences grief differently and there is no normal or right way to grieve
- While your life has changed some of these reactions should lessen over time as you come to terms with your new situation.
- If you have any concerns tell your parents or teacher.

# THINGS YOU MIGHT TRY TO HELP YOU

- You are normal and you are having normal reactions to an abnormal event.
- Talk to people and tell them what is on your mind. Talk to parents, to your teachers. Talking is a great way to help at this time.
- No-one can resolve all their worries by themselves.
- Your teacher or parents will be able to help you.
- People love you and care about you. Let them help.
- Try to keep a routine and do familiar things – this will also help you.
- Spend lots of time with your family and friends.
- Do things that you like and make you feel good.
- Take some exercise – walking, running, playing games. This will get rid of some of the tension in your body and mind.
- Try to get plenty of rest.
- Take time to eat proper meals.
- Dreams or other thoughts about the death will lessen over time. They are reactions to what you have experienced. They are signs that your mind is trying to understand what happened.

# SUDDEN DEATH

## Information sheet for Parents/Relatives

When a young person experiences the sudden death of someone close to them it will likely be very upsetting for them – and you as parents/relatives. It is unlikely that they have experienced such an event before so you may never have been faced with such reactions on their part.

Their reactions are normal reactions to a tragic event. The signs and symptoms of their reactions will last for some time because life has changed for them – and for all of you.

The understanding and help from you, their teachers and their friends can help them to come to terms with the event. Sometimes more help than this is needed. This does not mean that anything is wrong with them. It only means that this traumatic event is just too powerful for them to deal with on their own.

Here are some of the common reactions to such an event. You may have noticed some of these:

| <b>THINKING</b>  | <b>FEELING</b>   |
|--|--|
| Confused<br>Nightmares/bad dreams<br>Poor concentration<br>Mental Turmoil<br>Negative thinking<br>Not interested in what is going on<br>Spending a lot of time thinking of what happened | Worried<br>Guilty<br>Angry<br>Sad<br>Easily upset<br>Irritable<br>Overwhelmed<br>Panicky |

| <b>BEHAVIOURS</b>  | <b>PHYSICAL COMPLAINTS</b>   |
|--|--|
| Loss of appetite<br>Being very quiet<br>Jumpy<br>Being quarrelsome/arguing | Feeling tired all the time<br>Unable to rest or settle<br>Feeling sick/knot in tummy<br>Cold and shivery |

## REMEMBER

- Everyone experiences grief differently and there is no normal or right way to grieve
- Some of these symptoms should lessen over time
- If not more specialist help may be required. Talk to your GP/School about this.

# SUDDEN DEATH

## Information sheet for Parents/Relatives

### How to support Young People

#### 1. Talk about the death

When a young person wants to talk about death, listen to them, answer questions – if you can. Provide comfort and support. We may not always have good explanations to offer them but making time to listen to them and acknowledging how they are feeling will have a long lasting positive effect.

#### 2. Provide a consistent predictable pattern for them

Young people may feel more anxious about themselves and others at such a time. They may be more clingy and worried about you when you go out. Try to provide a predictable routine for them at home and avoid too many absences to start with. If you are going out let them know in advance, say where you are going, what time you will be back and how they can contact you. Contact them when you arrive at your destination.

#### 3. Other suggestions

- Make time to listen when your child wants to talk.
- Spend time with him/her. If you are around when a query arises he/she is more likely to ask you about it.
- Reassure your child that he/she is loved, and secure/safe.
- At a time like this he/she may feel anxious about himself, about family members and about friends.
- If he/she is behaving differently – e.g. jumpy or angry, etc, do not take it personally. This is a normal reaction to an abnormal event. Try to help him/her deal with it.
- Provide a good consistent structure for him/her. Stick to familiar routines. At a time of shock young people need reminders that they are loved and familiar structures need to be kept in place for them.
- Be flexible with these structures.
- Remind them that it takes the body and the mind some time to come to terms with the event they have experienced.
- Be nurturing, supportive and protective.
- Note their reactions.
- Give your child 'choices' and a sense of control.
- If you need help in supporting your child, ask for it.

Useful websites

<http://www.tcf.org.uk/index.htm>



<http://www.childbereavement.org.uk/>



<http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk/index.html>



Daytime Helpline: 0844 477 9400

Email: [helpline@cruse.org.uk](mailto:helpline@cruse.org.uk)

<http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/index.htm>

