

# **SAINTFIELD HIGH SCHOOL**



## **CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND BEREAVEMENT POLICY**

**Revised June 2020**

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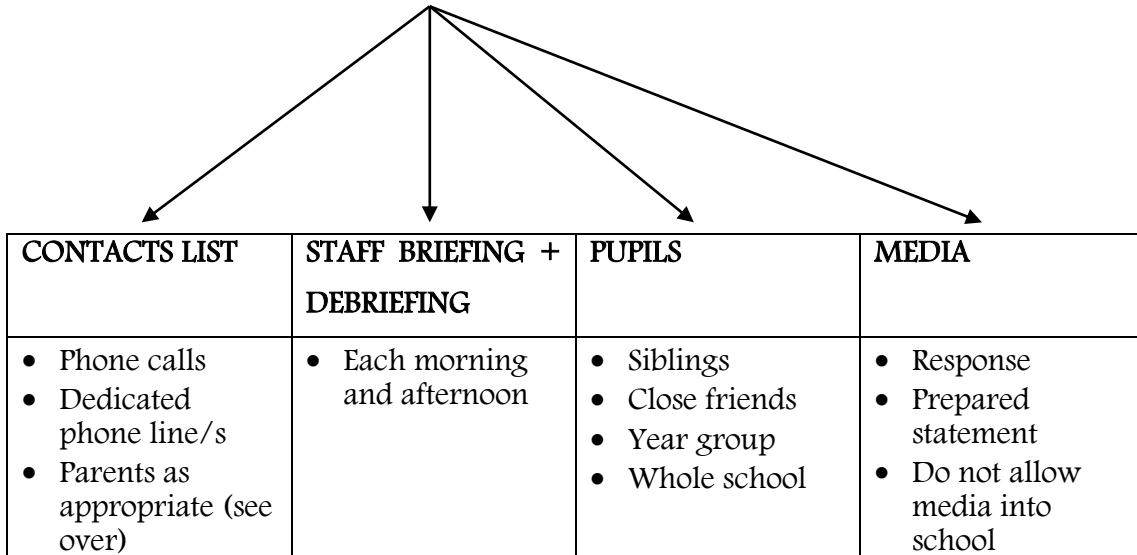
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**CRISIS INTERVENTION  
ACTION PLAN**

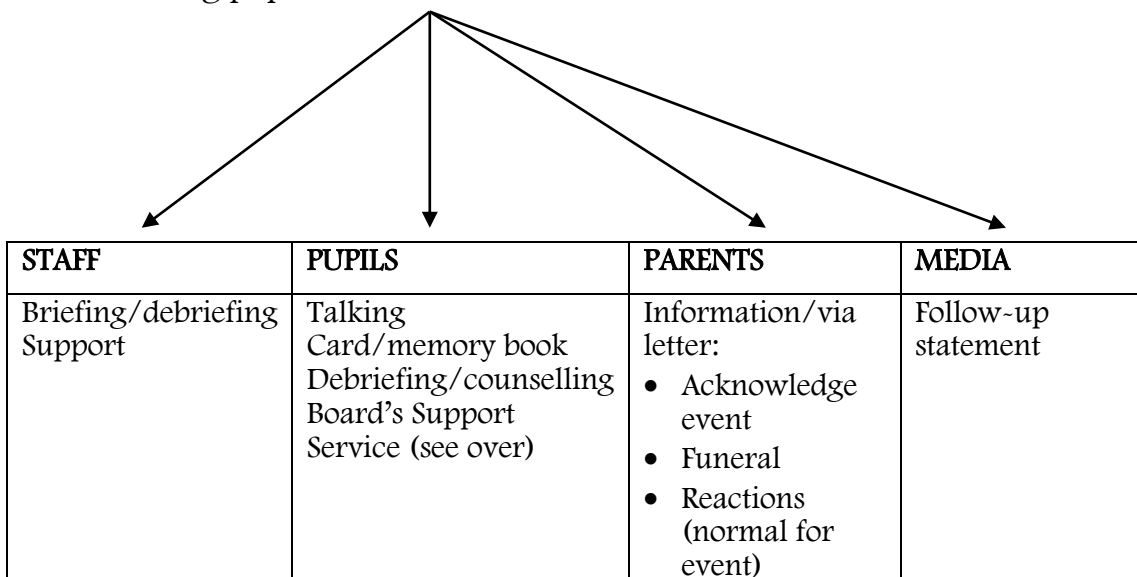
**Day 1: Information ~ receiving and communicating to others**

- 1 Central information point ~ designated person and place
- 2 Action committee ~ adopt roles



**Day 2: Ongoing/Follow-Up Action+ Support**

- 1 Funeral plans ~ monitor the arrangements that are in place
- 2 Monitoring pupils and staff



## *Crisis Intervention*

### *Useful phone numbers*

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Phone Number</b>
Local Hospitals		
~ Ards Hospital		02891 812661
~ City Hospital		02890 329241
~ Downe Hospital		02844 613311
~ Lagan Valley Hospital		02892 665141
~ Royal Victoria Hospital		02890 240503
~ Ulster Hospital		02890484511
Chair Board of Governors	Mr William Dick	02897 510125 07977 098 129
Childrens' Services – Local Team	South Eastern HSCT	02844 613511
Counselling Services	Child Line	0844 8920245
Crisis / Bereavement Service EA - SE		02890 566200
Cruse Bereavement Care		0808 808 1677
Education Authority	Mrs Sara Long	02890 566200
Education Welfare Officer	Ms P Deagan	02844 615704
Family Works	School Counsellor	02891 821721
Local clergy	1 <sup>st</sup> Saintfield Presbyterian	02897 519883
Local clergy	2 <sup>nd</sup> Saintfield Presbyterian	02897 511409
Local clergy	Ballygowan Presbyterian	02897 521096
Local clergy	Church of Ireland	02897 519653
Local Health Centre	Saintfield	02897 510575
NIFRS	Eastern Area Headquarters	02890 310360
PSNI	Downpatrick	02844 615011
School Health	Downpatrick	02844 513798
School Psychologist	Fiona Fraser-Brenchley	02890 566920
	Other Agencies	
Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)	<a href="mailto:enquiries@ace-ed.org.uk">enquiries@ace-ed.org.uk</a>	0300 0115 142
Aware	<a href="mailto:info@aware-ni.org">info@aware-ni.org</a>	02890 357 820
Barnardos	<a href="http://www.barnardos.org.uk">www.barnardos.org.uk</a>	
Bullying UK	<a href="mailto:askus@familylives.org.uk">askus@familylives.org.uk</a>	0808 800 2222
Cara-Friend/LGBT Switchboard NI	<a href="http://www.cara-friend.org.uk">www.cara-friend.org.uk</a>	0808 8000 390
Childline	<a href="http://www.childline.org.uk">www.childline.org.uk</a>	0800 1111
Children's Law Centre	<a href="mailto:info@childrenslawcentre.org">info@childrenslawcentre.org</a>	02890 245 704
Family Lives	<a href="mailto:askus@familylives.org.uk">askus@familylives.org.uk</a>	0808 800 2222
KIDSCAPE Parents Helpline	<a href="mailto:info@kidscape.org.uk">info@kidscape.org.uk</a>	0845 1 205 204
Lifeline	<a href="http://www.lifelinehelpline.info">www.lifelinehelpline.info</a>	0808 808 8000

Minding your head	<a href="http://www.mindingyourhead.info">www.mindingyourhead.info</a>	
NSPCC	<a href="mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk">help@nspcc.org.uk</a>	0808 800 5000
Samaritans Helpline	<a href="http://www.samaritans.org">www.samaritans.org</a>	116 123
The Mix	<a href="http://www.themix.org.uk">www.themix.org.uk</a>	0808 808 4994
Young Minds	<a href="http://www.youngminds.org.uk">www.youngminds.org.uk</a>	
Youth Access	<a href="mailto:admin@youthaccess.org.uk">admin@youthaccess.org.uk</a>	020 8772 9900

## Intervention Team

Intervention Team Members	Name
Key Member	Miss Hynds
Deputy	Mrs Derby
Media Spokesperson	Miss Hynds
Counsellor	Mrs Bradley
Board of Governors	Mr Dick
Phoneline	Mrs Mullan
Central Point	Principal's Office/Board Room

## **Intervention Team and Roles**

No matter how prepared we think we are, death is often traumatic and unexpected. Therefore a considered, planned and organised response to an event is much more effective than acting on impulse. It is for this reason we have created an Intervention Team in Saintfield High School.

### **Intervention Team and Roles:**

- **Key Member** Miss Hynds (Principal). She is the first point of contact and is responsible for liaising with all parties concerned and affected.
- **Deputy** Mrs Derby (Vice-Principal). She will temporarily deputise for the Key Member in the running of their routine day to day tasks.
- **Media Spokesperson** Key Member or Deputy who may (if the need arises) liaise with the media and possibly the Police. Only information agreed by the Intervention Team should be released.
- **Member of Board of Governors** Mr Dick, Chairman of Board of Governors, in a crisis to come into school to liaise with Key Member and Deputy.

### **Others**

- **Head of Senior/ Junior School** Heads of School ~ liaise with members of staff, key member, deputy and Counsellor.
- **School Counsellor** Mrs Bradley offers support, consultation and guidance to the team and the bereaved should they required it. Make contact with Bereavement Support Team at the Board if required. The Familyworks School Counsellor will also be a valuable support to the school.
- **School Secretary** School phone line will be busy. Secretary should be briefed by Principal on information to be released. Keep records of all phone calls made and information given. Have a separate line ~ one that is not accessible for incoming calls.

NB Team to meet annually to become acquainted with changing situations, personnel and each others roles.

## Pro forma letter (for parents/carers)

The pro forma below is a template and can, of course, be changed/alterd as is appropriate.

‘With great regret, we have learnt of the death/deaths of .....  
and we extend our deepest sympathy to the family circle.

(information about funeral etc)

NB Included with the letter to parents could be leaflets from ‘Bereavement Support Services for Schools Psychology Section’.

- Information for Parents
- Bereavement in Children      ~      What to Expect  
   ~      How to offer support
- Information for Pupils



### **Prepared sample statement for media**

We are sorry to learn of the tragic ..... of  
.....

We hope at this time the school would be given the privacy needed to support our pupils at this difficult time, etc

NB If the Principal wishes to comment about the pupil, they may want to gain permission from the family, and could include information relating to the following:

- Sporting achievements;
- Musical talents;
- Academic success;
- Personal attributes.

## Accidents/principles of emergency first aid

### Essentials staff should know ~

- what to do in an emergency
- Location of:
  1. Emergency exits/evacuation procedures;
  2. Fire alarms;
  3. Assembly points;
  4. Relevant telephone numbers;
  5. If off site, school mobile phone.

### Know specific knowledge of provision of first aid in the school

#### 1. Names of First Aiders:

Mr Chisholm  
Mr M Elliott  
Mr Mageean  
Mrs L McClurg  
Mrs McMordie  
Mrs K Roy

- #### 2. Location of First Aid provisions ~ Home Economics room, Resources Office/Medical room, Science Prep room.

### Accident Report Forms

- Accident Report Forms are kept in the Secretary's Office.
- Always complete an Accident Report form in detail immediately after the incident ~ this should be forwarded to the Principal for their attention.

### What is expected of you?

- \* In any situation you can only do your best.
- \* You may not be sure that you want the responsibility of giving help in accident and emergency situations: you may be afraid of seeing blood or severe injuries; you may feel someone can cope better than you.
- \* A First Aider should be contacted immediately and the Principal or Vice-Principal.
- \* A First Aider's aim is always to:
  1. Limit the effects of the condition on the casualty;
  2. Preserve life;
  3. Promote the casualty's recovery if possible.

## **First Aider**

In any incident the First Aider has a five point Action Plan:

- 1 **Assess the situation**
  - ~ Take in what has happened quickly and calmly
  - ~ Look for dangers to yourself, the casualty and others
  - ~ Never put yourself at risk
- 2 **Make the area safe**
  - ~ Protect casualty, bystanders and yourself from danger
  - ~ Be aware of your limitations
- 3 **Assess the casualty/all casualties and give emergency first aid**
  - ~ Assess each casualty, treat those with life threatening conditions first
- 4 **Get help**
  - ~ Other First Aiders
  - ~ Principal/Vice Principal
  - ~ Emergency services
- 5 **Deal with the aftermath**
  - ~ After casualty has been treated, complete an accident report form.

The teacher (who is not a First Aider) should:

- 1 Deal with points 1 and 2 above, i.e. assess the situation and make the area safe;
- 2 GET APPROPRIATE HELP;
- 3 Talk to the casualty and find what the reaction is. Only in **minor** injuries i.e. grazes, slight cuts, an accident where the casualty responds and move themselves, should you move them, otherwise do NOT move them. Get the nearest First Aider;
- 4 Use the telephone or a pupil to go and get help, do not go yourself;
- 5 Reassure the casualty, help is on the way.

### **To summarise:**

- » Assess the situation;
- » Make the area safe;
- » Get help;
- » Reassure only ~ do not move the casualty;
- » Complete Accident Report form.

### **Principal**

- ❖ Ensure procedures are being followed.
- ❖ Assess situation personally.
- ❖ Contact parents/carers.
- ❖ Instruct Vice Principal to organise cover teachers to help with children who are distressed. Organise pupils who witnessed the accident/incident to go to another room.
- ❖ Meet doctor, emergency services on arrival to brief them and direct them.
- ❖ After casualty has been dealt with, investigate accident/incident.
- ❖ Check on well-being of pupils and staff involved ~ offer necessary support/advice.

### **Vice Principal**

- Support Principal in carrying out procedures, alternative cover arrangements if necessary.
- Contact parents/carers of children who are very distressed.
- Organise support for affected pupils and members of staff.

### **List of qualified First Aiders**

- ◇ Mr Chisholm
- ◇ Mr Elliott
- ◇ Mr Mageean
- ◇ Mrs McClurg
- ◇ Mrs McMordie
- ◇ Mrs Roy

# CHILDREN WITH THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE

All staff should give consideration to the identification of pupils at risk of suicide.

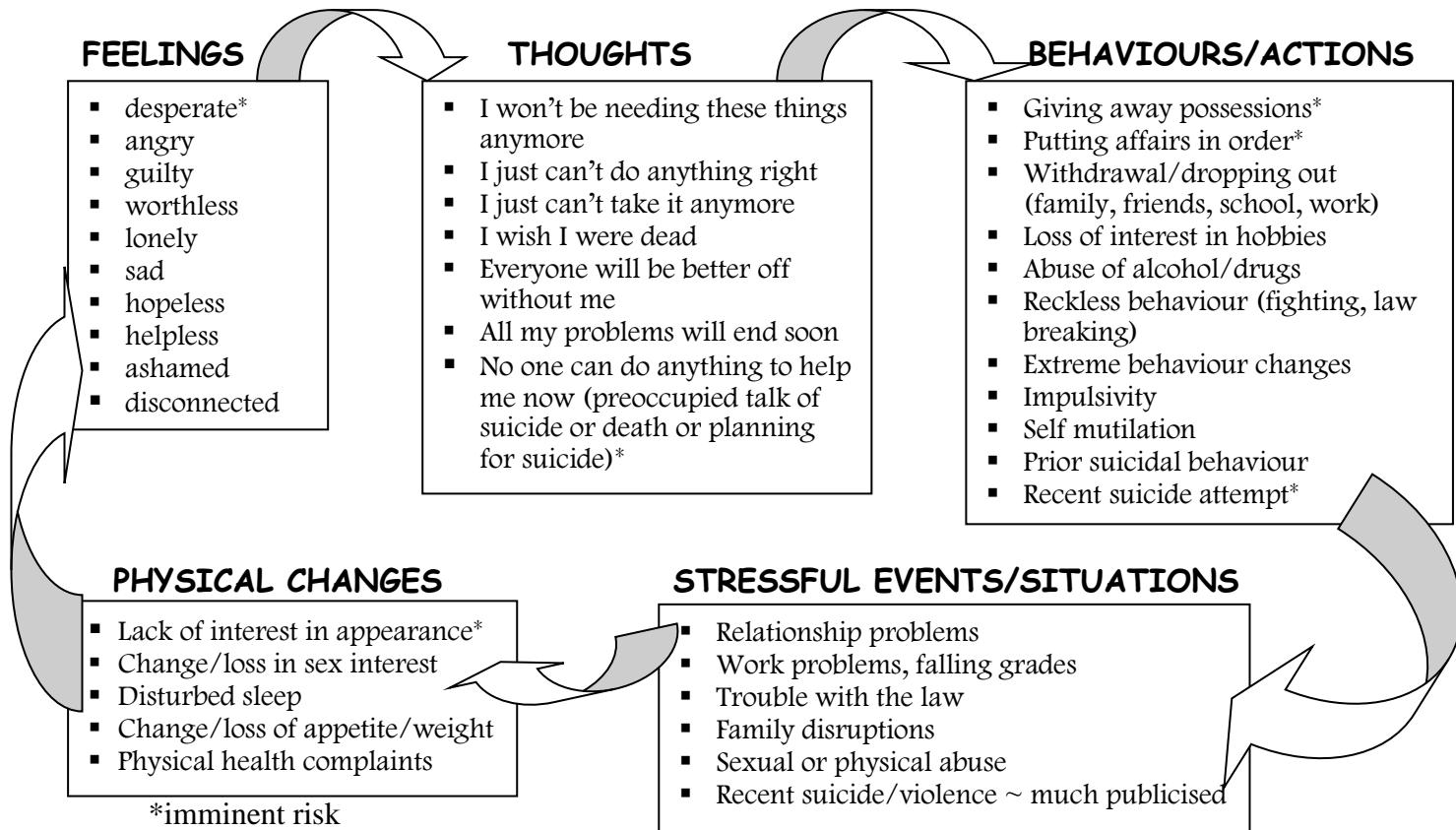
## STEP 1 WHAT TO LOOK FOR → STRESS → DISTRESS



### CONNECTING



They want to connect with you. Below are invitations for you to consider about whether the child could be having thoughts of suicide.



## STEP 2 WHAT TO DO NOW

### UNDERSTANDING



You now need to ENGAGE with the young people by:

#### BEING OBSERVANT

- Recognise signs for concern
- Suicide may be an option for anyone
- Pay attention to your hunches

#### SHOWING RESPECT

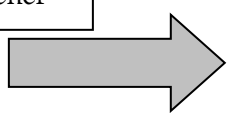
- Try to understand
- Be natural/be yourself
- Take it seriously

#### REACHING OUT

- Show you care
- Tell them what you have noticed
- Hear what they are saying

#### GIVING SUPPORT

- Let them talk
- Suggest other options
- Offer realistic hope
- Identify other supports: family, friends, counsellors, crisis lines
- Refer to Principal/Vice~  
Principal/Designated Teacher



**STEP 3** YOU NOW NEED TO → REVIEW THE RISK BY ASKING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

**ASSISTING** ARE YOU HAVING THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE? .....YES

Refer to Designated Teacher for Child Protection or ASIST Trained Staff to continue Steps 3 and 4

- ~ Designated Teacher for Child Protection: Mrs Bradley
- ~ Deputy designated Teacher for Child Protection: Mrs Convill
- ~ ASIST Trained Staff: Mrs Bradley/Mrs Derby

CURRENT FACTORS TO ASK ABOUT			BACKGROUND FACTORS TO ASK ABOUT		
Current Suicide Plan	Pain	Resources	Prior Suicidal Behaviour	Mental Health	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪Do you have a plan?</li> <li>▪How?</li> <li>▪How prepared?</li> <li>▪How soon?</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">YES</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">They are PREPARED</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪Do you have pain which at times feels unbearable?</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">YES</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">They are DESPERATE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪Do you feel you don't have any or very few resources? i.e. someone to talk to.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">YES</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">They are ALONE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪Have you ever attempted suicide before?</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">YES</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">They are FAMILIAR</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪Are you receiving or have you received mental health care?</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">YES</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">They are VULNERABLE</p>	

**STEP 4** WHAT TO DO → CARRY OUT THE 4 STEP PLAN AND DO NOT LEAVE THEM UNATTENDED

- 1 MAKE A SAFE PLAN ~ If they have a plan inform someone or disable it yourself if it is safe to do so.
- 2 MAKE A CONTRACT ~ Agree to work together to get through this, e.g. make a verbal agreement to talk with parent/carers in person.
- 3 MAKE COMMITMENTS ~ Agree on actions to be taken, e.g. can we meet tomorrow at 9.00am?
- 4 FOLLOW UP ~ Have commitments been met?

**IMMEDIATE ACTION OR LINKS**

- ~ You must inform the Principal
- ~ You must inform ASIST Trained Staff/designated Teacher
- ~ Parents/carers must be informed
- ~ GP must be informed – via parent/carers
- ~ Social Services must be informed via Principal or designated Teacher

## **Bereavement Policy**

### **Introduction**

For most of us death is a difficult subject, something we would rather not talk about, something best forgotten. The way we, as adults, deal with death shapes how we respond to and communicate this subject with children and young people. For many of us death is so upsetting that we may find it difficult to cope ourselves, let alone provide support to pupils. This policy has been written to try to open up discussion and to make us more able to cope with the pressure of dealing with bereavement in school.

We in Saintfield High School feel strongly about the way death is handled and discussed in school and as such believe that we should provide:

- an environment that is sensitive and compassionate to the needs of those wishing to grieve;
- a policy authorising the school's proposed planned response to death and bereavement;
- opportunities for discussion that help lessen the stigma attached to death, reducing its status as a taboo subject. We will endeavour to incorporate the subjects of death and dying into existing classroom activities/subjects in a compassionate way e.g. through poetry in English, Religious Education and other subjects.

### **School Curriculum**

Young people often begin to challenge and question parental values and belief systems. Schools can provide support and resources to help them answer these questions.

- Popular television can be useful e.g. programmes that deal with hospitals (Casualty, Holby City, ER, 24 hours in A & E etc.) or soap operas can be used to open up discussion which allows opportunity for activities and misconceptions to be aired.
- Religious Education provides an opportunity to study in more detail multi-cultural perspectives on death. Seeing that there are many other systems and many ways to mourn can be enlightening.
- PD ~ the impact of bereavement on young people can be explained. Group work allows young people to openly discuss their fears and anxieties. Abstract methods may be useful, such as drama, art, prose or poetry.
- Through the Resilience Curriculum pupils will be given the opportunity to discuss this matter within a range of scenarios.

It is during adolescence that we become aware and begin to consider our own mortality. Therefore it may be an appropriate time to look at it as a health issue ~ feelings of loss, a stressful life event, a mental health issue. Pupils can then explore ways of reducing stress if such an event occurs.

- Mentor Systems ~ identified pupils offer contact and support to the bereaved once the initial stages of grief have elapsed. A member of staff (i.e. Mrs Derby or Mrs Bradley) will support pupils. The benefits of such a scheme are that the bereaved find it less stigmatising to have contact with another pupil as opposed to a member of staff.

### **Death and Bereavement in Education**

Schools today, have an obligation to provide a curriculum that promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of their pupils (see Saintfield High School aims and objectives).

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Key Stage 3 | Pupils should recognise the changing relationships within the family caused by death.   |
| Key Stage 4 | Pupils should be aware of loss, separation and bereavement and be able to identify ways of managing or preventing stress and how to ask for and give support. |



## Managing the first day

Whilst every situation that surrounds a death is unique there are similar implications and outcomes to most.

- Upon hearing news of a death, members of staff should in the first instance contact the Principal. If a parent, relative or close friend of a child has died while the child is in school, the Principal will decide (after speaking to the child's next of kin) who should approach the child.
- Best approach would usually be to have a parent or relative to come into school to break the news with the support of the Principal.
- If no parents, nor relatives are available then the Principal will decide who is best suited/qualified to deal with the situation.
- One of the Principal's primary roles is to gather details surrounding any death. IT IS VITAL TO HAVE ALL THE FACTS. If the death/s have been particularly traumatic, the media may be involved.
- If the Principal is involved with family or other members of staff then the Vice-Principal should be responsible for dealing with the media after consultation with the Principal.
- The Principal should meet with all teaching staff as it is essential that correct information is disseminated.
- The Principal should decide on hearing news of a death/deaths whether the whole team needs to be assembled e.g. the death of a parent, although traumatic would not normally warrant such action.

## Multiple Deaths, Death in School

These instances may warrant assembling the entire Intervention Team.

The Principal must quickly:

- gather together facts and details;
- determine the likely impact of the event on the whole school;
- in the case of multiple deaths, additional support and resources may be needed, e.g. Bereavement Support ~ see Mrs Bradley  
Additional teaching staff ~ see Mrs Derby;
- assemble the team;
- after consulting with deceased's family, the Principal would then call a general staff meeting;
- The Principal should discuss with staff how they feel about meeting with their form class as not all staff will feel confident and should not be pressurised;
- Announce the news to the rest of the school ~ either by assembly or through form tutors.

### **Special Assembly/Form Class**

- » It is important to be honest and open and to not make any assumptions
- » Be prepared for a mixture of emotions ~ disbelief, panic, fear or anger.

### **After Assembly/Form Announcement**

- ❖ In form rooms and preferably in small groups, pupils should be allowed to express their emotions, their feelings and thoughts in a safe environment.
- ❖ The teacher should be there to support them and not let them feel in any way inhibited.
- ❖ It must be remembered that pupils will react in different ways, so sensitivity must be shown to those pupils who are not ready to show their feelings.

### **Other Considerations**

- ▲ In the event of multiple deaths there will be considerable media interest and need to appoint a media spokesperson e.g. Miss Hynds or Mrs Derby (it is important that one individual, pre-selected and briefed by the team relays consistent information).
- ▲ Someone needs to be appointed to:
  - ~ retrieve personal belongings for next of kin;
  - ~ Amend/update information on school database including references and addresses;
- Mrs Derby / School Secretary ~ Update/amend notice boards
- ~ Class registers
- ▲ Send letter to parents to allow them to explain to their children the meaning and implications of what has happened. (It is important for the parents and school to be consistent i.e. giving the children the same message and deal with the after effects similarly.)

The team has to be careful between achieving its desired objectives of returning the school to a state of normality and making decisions which to some might appear insensitive (taking pupil's work down off walls, removing their desk/chair, rearranging a classroom etc).

### **Funerals, Memorial Services/Pupil Participation**

Before the bereaved pupil or member of staff returns to school there is likely to be a funeral.

- The Key Member (Principal) should be the only person representing the school in contact with the family. He/she will need to discuss funeral arrangements. It is probable pupils and staff will express a wish to attend, but they should only do so with the agreement of the deceased's family, as well as the agreement of their own parents/carers.

Pupil bereavement ~ Principal, Form Tutor, Head Boy, Head Girl

Staff bereavement ~ Principal and close staff member/members

Pupil death ~ Principal with family consultation and bereavement support service

- If the bereaved family wish pupils and staff to attend, the team should be available to offer support before and after the service.
- If the family do not wish the school to attend, their wishes should be respected and the school should consider arranging an alternative.
- Planning a Memorial Service, reading lessons, poems or choosing hymns can assist in the grieving process.
- Class most affected might like to write down their thoughts and feelings; these could then be given to the bereaved family.
- It is the role of the Key Member (Principal) to ensure that no inappropriate remarks or comments are made.
- After the funeral/memorial service, staff and pupils should be encouraged to meet and express their thoughts and feelings. Refreshments should be provided.
- If a child expresses a wish to attend a funeral and feels he/she is able, they should be encouraged. Allowing children to attend such events gives them the opportunity to express their grief, allowing them to accept the reality of their loss, say goodbye and begin the grieving process.
- On the other hand if a child does not wish to attend they should not be encouraged to go. This also applies to staff members.

## **Managing the first week and after**

The work of the team initially should be pro-active, the second phase should be re-active (sympathetic and supportive).

- Team should meet to assess progress and developments.
- Key Member or person appointed by Key Member should make a home visit to prepare the bereaved for the return to school. Returning to school will be traumatic.
- In most cases (providing the parents/carers of the bereaved pupil agree) it is advisable that everyone is aware of the situation before the bereaved returns (teaching, ancillary staff and pupils).
- Ensure that pupil's loss is acknowledged and teachers should endeavour to foster an environment that is compassionate yet disciplined (the bereaved need to get back into routine and school may be the only place this is available).
- They should be assigned a personal contact e.g. Form Tutor or School Counsellor who should listen sensitively, answer questions and support the child. This is vital in bridging the gap until the adults in the bereaved family are able to function normally again.
- Bereavement of a member of staff ~ key member should follow their wishes.

## **On-Going Remembrance**

- ▲ Anniversaries often spark feelings associated with the initial bereavement.
- ▲ Birthdays, anniversary of the death are often remembered by pupils.
- ▲ Form Tutors/School Counsellor should keep a record of deaths and make class teachers aware of a forthcoming anniversary.
- ▲ Be aware that emotions/reactions may not surface until much later ..... sometimes months, years after the event.

## **After the Crisis**

- ◆ Discuss how the plan of action was implemented.
- ◆ Discuss useful and less useful courses of action/support.
- ◆ Revise Action plan.
- ◆ What skills do members of staff wish to acquire/need to improve?

## **Death of a member of staff**

- The Key Member (Principal) should break the news as soon as possible to avoid rumours.
- He/She should call a staff meeting to allow them to grieve in private before announcing the news to the rest of the school.
- Generally the news should be broken in assembly where everyone can be told together.
- Afterwards children should go to their form class where they have the opportunity to express their grief.
- Arrangements should be made by Principal/Vice-Principal for the class of the deceased.
- Principal and Vice-Principal should decide if there is a need to involve other services e.g. Bereavement Support Service.
- Make a decision, after discussion with the deceased's family as to school arrangements on the day of the funeral.
- Organise a school memorial service. It provides an opportunity for everyone to come to terms with their grief in a shared experience and for those who have been unable to attend the funeral to express themselves through drama, poems and letters.
- Consider what the school can do e.g. choir sing at the funeral service, pupil/member of staff do a reading etc (always with the wishes/permission of the deceased's family).
- Open a book of remembrance.
- Plant a tree etc.
- Key member should monitor those teachers particularly affected by the death and offer them support and make them aware of additional support which is available e.g. Cruse Bereavement Care (0808 808 1677, [helpline@cruse.org.uk](mailto:helpline@cruse.org.uk)) or Inspire Workplaces and Inspire Students (0800 389 5362, [workandstudy@inspirewellbeing.org](mailto:workandstudy@inspirewellbeing.org)).
- Keep classes informed of changes in daily routine.
- Decide how long the school may need for a settling down period (must be flexible, may need to be revised).
- Be aware of children who over-react.

## **Death of a pupil**

If faced with sudden death the Key Member should contact the 'Bereavement Support Service' for advice and/or:

- ~ meet with members of staff to break the news;
- ~ immediate class friends should be gathered and the news be broken to them;
- ~ call a school assembly (as for member of staff).

## **Death occurs in school**

- » Immediately contact family and emergency services. This is once again the responsibility of the Key Member.
- » Deputy (Vice-Principal) organise to clear the area around the deceased e.g. classroom, playing field etc.
- » If there are any siblings in school. They should be removed from class following the wishes of the family e.g. family member may wish to break the news or may prefer Principal or other member of staff to break the news.
- » Contact Bereavement Support Service to deal with the immediate aftermath i.e. witnesses of the tragedy.
- » Organise a room for meeting relations or Police.

## **Memorials**

The need of ceremonialise death appears to be something central to human nature. It is important that we respect the deceased by carefully considering how they might wish to be remembered.

Considerations:

- ⌘ Everyone's thoughts and ideas ~ pupils, staff and family;
- ⌘ Size and cost should be unimportant;
- ⌘ Individualistic and reflect the personality of the deceased;
- ⌘ Benefit the school.

NB Capital can be raised through fund raising activities. This can be very helpful in bringing people together to share their grief whilst raising money for beneficial causes.

Examples:

- \* Photographs
- \* Paintings
- \* Murals
- \* Benches
- \* Planting a tree
- \* Wildlife area
- \* Scrap book
- \* Cup/shield

## **Grief reactions**

### **Ten Years to Adolescence**

They are able to think about death's long term consequences, its justice or injustice, its inevitability and their own mortality. Adolescence is a time of loss and separation, loss of childhood and the care and safety this brings and a striving for independence and identity. Any bereavement at this time is complicated.

Grief reactions in an adolescent are similar to that of adults; such as: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and lack of acceptance.

**Denial:** often the first reaction. It serves as a protective reaction and is quite normal early on.

**Anger:** denial disappears after a few days and may change to anger eg at nursing staff or doctors, other family members, sometimes at the deceased and sometimes at themselves (self-recriminations and guilt).

**Bargaining:** they attempt to preserve the belief in world being a just place. They will try to find a reason for the death.

**Depression:** When the bereaved acknowledges the injustice and unpredictability of life's events and their own lack of control over them, they may become depressed. Although unpleasant, it allows them to face the reality of their loss.

**Acceptance:** This is when the bereaved can accept the loss and start to make new relationships and a new life, looking to the future with some optimism.

(NB The stages of grief can occur in a different sequence and sometimes some sequences can be revisited).

### **Additional Issues for Adolescents**

- Resistance to communicating with adults.
- Peer pressure ~ sometimes don't show their true feelings.
- Act out their anger with aggressive and anti-social behaviour both at home and in the community.
- May develop disorders linked to health or sexuality eg eating disorders, obsessive compulsive disorders or self-harming behaviours.
- Some may take on the role of the deceased adult eg boy becomes the 'man of the house' and so does not go through the grieving process or move through the normal development of an adolescent.
- Become pathologically depressed ~ are unable to eat, are morose and unresponsive.
- For some adolescents bereavement can provide an opportunity for growth and development as they mature and learn to cope with adversity and change.

- They can become confused and hold distorted views about life, death and their own mortality. Feeling indestructible and taking uncalculated risks one moment and the next feeling very vulnerable.
- They may develop a phobia that they will succumb to the same death. They may become obsessive about their own personal health and bodily functions.



## **Supporting the family**

- A death in a family will disrupt the family for many months, in fact the family will never be the same again. Family members are grieving and relationships alter. Sometimes there is a change of carer, house or school. Therefore it is helpful to minimise changes and disruptions in their daily routine and life in school.
- The family may emotionally and physically withdraw from the child to protect themselves from more distress. They will deny the child is grieving which can cause grief reactions of anger, withdrawal or psychosomatic behaviour such as headaches or stomach ache.
- Regression is often common and the child may become clingy, difficult or withdrawn. School work may suffer. These changes will be partly due to grief but also the disruption and changes within the family. Even the simple withdrawal of attention can lead to the child feeling resentment, jealousy or guilt towards the deceased. Parents and carers need to know this is normal and will decrease as the family becomes more stable.
- Parents and carers need to be informed of the benefits that a child gains from being involved in ceremonies and rituals that follow the death. These help the child express their feelings and come to terms with their loss.
- The family can only benefit from the support of teachers if the teachers have their own support system in place. Supporting bereaved families can be emotionally draining and if one person is acting as the counsellor over a period of time they may need to turn to others for emotional support, advice or information.

## **Self care**

- Anticipate possible reactions you may experience with grief and loss. If you are ever unsure how you should react to others' grief, honesty is always the best line to take.
- Accept you may experience emotional reactions yourself. You may start to doubt your own abilities, start to query life's injustices and perhaps your own beliefs.
- Panic attacks and worries about your own or family's deaths can be common.
- Never take on too much. Look to others for support ~ a partner, friend or colleague.
- It is important to remember that you alone cannot carry other people's grief.

## **Key Points for Counselling the Bereaved:**

- \* Offer to support, but don't be obtrusive.
- \* Share grief.
- \* Allow discussion.
- \* Allow expression.
- \* Talk openly but honestly.
- \* Be aware of other peoples' beliefs and values.
- \* Reassure those who feel that they are in some way to blame.
- \* Be honest with explanations.
- \* Be compassionate but firm.
- \* Be prepared to ask for additional help if needed.
- \* Expect regression.
- \* Never avoid the bereaved.
- \* Never pretend life will be the same.
- \* Never put a time limit on how long you expect the grieving period to last.
- \* Be honest at all times.