



## KESGRAVE HIGH SCHOOL

### **BEREAVEMENT POLICY**

The purpose of the Bereavement Policy is to assist everyone involved at a time when there may be shock, upset and confusion ensuring that there is as little disruption as possible, effective communication takes place and each member of the school community is supported to help them through a very difficult period of time.

No matter how prepared we think we are death or loss or separation is often traumatic and unexpected. Its unpredictability can severely unbalance a school whose normal working environment is one based on routine. Death, therefore, can be regarded as a potentially disunifying force that exists in an unpredictable world. Conversely; it can also be unifying; bringing people together in their grief.

Intervention is essential in managing and minimising any disruption. The aim should be to restore equilibrium between an individual's environment and his/her perception of the world as a safe and predictable place.

A considered, planned and organised response to an event is much more effective than acting on impulse. It is vital that our school maintains a shared course of action. It is for this reason that our school has an intervention team for major incidents. This group will be ready and willing to work collaboratively. A similar team exists for emergencies.

**The relevant intervention team will take responsibility dependant on the need;  
(See appendix 1 for further information)**

#### ***Multiple Deaths/Death in School/or any other traumatic loss or separation***

- Team to assemble as quickly as possible to gather the necessary facts and to discuss the impact on the whole school
- The parents or next of kin to be contacted immediately
- Police to be informed
  
- Suffolk County Council to be informed - Janice Lee 01473 263940 (Strategic Lead of Resolutions/Education and Learning for Children and Young People)
- General staff briefing to be held to inform them of the situation
- A member of the pastoral team or key members will address this with the students as to what has taken place. A clear announcement without misinterpretation should be made. If a member of staff feels uncomfortable with this, procedures can be adjusted and additional support staff maybe required.

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## **KESGRAVE HIGH SCHOOL**

- It is essential to allow children to articulate their thoughts and feelings as sharing their grief in a supportive environment can help in facilitating the grieving process.
- If liaison with the Media is required this should be carried out by the Head Teacher (Mr Burgoyne) or in his absence the nominated Deputy Head (Miss Breckell).

### ***Death of a Staff Member or Pupil Not In School***

- Team to assemble as quickly as possible to gather the necessary facts and to discuss the impact on the whole school
- Key person to talk to parents or family to gain permission to inform the year group and staff and to agree what information needs to be communicated
- Decision on which students/staff need to be informed
- General staff briefing to be held to inform them of the situation
- Suffolk County Council to be informed – Janice Lee 01473 263940 (Strategic Lead of Resolutions/Education and Learning for Children and Young People)
- Appropriate students/staff to be informed in appropriate setting
- It may be necessary to retrieve personal belongings and plan their return to the family. Information on the school's computer system should be removed as soon as possible, likewise other school and class records as appropriate.

### ***Death of a Parent or Carer/Sibling***

- To discuss with the informant how and where the child will be told and by whom
- Key member to contact the family to seek permission/advice on what information is to be disclosed and to whom
- Further contact with family in due course to facilitate the return of the student and any additional support required

### ***Death of a Grandparent/relative/family friend***

- Communication with the student/family to ensure the child has been offered appropriate support within the school environment

### ***Cultural/Religious Implications***

- Key person to liaise with the family to ascertain if there is anything specific the school needs to be aware of or which needs to be implemented

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Confidentiality is essential. To avoid rumours, it is important to be open and honest wherever possible and not to make assumptions about the cause of death. It is important that all staff and pupils be informed as quickly as possible although consideration as to the correct procedure should be agreed first. Such news is often greeted with disbelief, possibly panic and fear. Staff should be prepared for a variety of responses.

It is essential to allow students and staff to articulate their thoughts and feelings and for them to have access to support. Sharing their grief in a supportive environment can help facilitate the grieving process. It must be recognised that some students/staff may not wish to share their feelings immediately.

Where it is thought necessary, we will engage a professional bereavement counsellor to work with staff or students.

If communication with the media is necessary, it is important that one person is nominated. This should be the Head Teacher but in his absence the deputy may cover. A letter to all parents may be required.

### ***Funerals, Memorial Services***

Before the bereaved student or member of staff returns to school there is likely to be a funeral. If other students or staff wish to attend there should be agreement with the deceased's family. If appropriate, the Key Members should represent the school.

If it is likely that others will attend, especially students, then support should be available before and after the service as this could be a traumatic experience for young people.

### ***The First Week/Return***

The first part of the team's work is proactive, but at a later stage this becomes reactive. The situation will need to be monitored by the team (or those handling the situation). Before returning to school, it is deemed advisable for the Key Members to make a home visit or phone call to be as fully briefed as possible to determine the manner of return and outstanding worries the bereaved may have regarding their reintegration.

Most will want to return to normal as quickly as possible. Staff should be aware of this need. In the interests of the bereaved, staff should endeavour to foster an environment that is compassionate, yet disciplined. Getting the balance right can be difficult, but we must remember that school may be seen as an important safe haven.

As time progresses, the needs of the bereaved continue – especially at anniversaries.

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It may be possible to consult and liaise with external agencies that can offer further counselling and advice – in or outside school.

It is important that all staff are recognised as having their own needs, as handling such matters may indeed bring back some painful memories. This plan should show that the school is aware that each case, whilst different, should be approached in a similar manner.



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# Appendix 1

### The Intervention Teams

#### In the event of:

#### **Multiple Deaths/Death in School/or any other traumatic loss or separation Death of a Staff Member or Pupil Not In School**

The Key Members (Mr Burgoyne HeadTeacher /Miss C Breckell Deputy HeadTeacher) – are first point of contact, responsible for dealing with all parties.

The Head Teacher/Deputy Head will allocate a personal mentor if needed (to act as a listener, time out of class etc) after consultation with the bereaved person. The Head Teacher/Deputy Head will also act as media spokesperson, liaising with media and police if needed – post to be determined at time of incident.

#### In the event of:

#### **Death of a Parent or Carer/Sibling Death of a Grandparent/relative/family friend**

The Key Members (Head or Year/Pastoral Team) will be first point of contact, responsible for dealing with all parties

The Assistant Head Teacher Miss Roz Coe and the Senior Student Support Officer Teresa Rush may deputise for Key Members in the running of routine tasks – assisting above teams in all events.

The Chair of Governors or Key Member – will ensure that the Governing Body are informed.

The Company Secretary (Mrs Julie Garnett) – to oversee administration needs and be responsible for conveying group decisions.  
Business and Site Manager (Mrs Anita Collett) – If in the event of a death or major incident on school site who will liaise with HSE (Health and Safety Executive)

A bereavement counsellor – to be sourced dependant on the area of need

Trained team members (Miss R Coe/Mrs T Rush/Mrs E Newman) – at least two members of staff with specialist training in bereavement counselling will be able to offer support and guidance to the team.

The Key Members will need to decide whether the whole team needs to be assembled. The death of a parent, although traumatic, would not normally warrant such action. The death of a pupil/staff member may well need a team response.

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