



BEREAVEMENT POLICY

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SLT responsible:	Assistant Headteacher, Pastoral
Signatures: Chair of Governor Headteacher	

FEARNHILL SCHOOL

Rationale

The death of a student, a close relative of a student, or a member of staff can be traumatic for staff and students alike. For some students this can be their first real contact with the death of someone known to them. For teachers, it can be the first time they have needed to respond professionally to the shock and sadness experienced by those in their care.

Fearnhill School believes in adopting a holistic approach to the care of both its students and staff. When bereavement occurs, it can affect a variety of people, not just the family concerned. We aim to ensure that the appropriate members of the school community are given sufficient support and advice at such times. The management of a bereavement situation will be a central role for the appropriate Head of Key Stage who may be supported by other members of the Pastoral Team. Throughout the process, the Headteacher and/or the Assistant Headteacher in charge of Pastoral Care will oversee the process and offer advice and provide resources if required.

Entitlement to time off in the case of a bereavement can be found in the School's Leave of Absence Policy.

Purpose

This policy is intended to reflect Fearnhill's positive ethos and should contribute to the caring community we endeavour to nurture. The main purpose of the policy is to ensure that all students and staff faced with bereavement are provided with a level of quality support which is commensurate with their needs and wishes. This support includes the opportunity for them to express their feelings in a safe environment, to be given space and time to come to terms with their loss and to access specialist support if necessary. Furthermore, the situation for the individual and the school community will be monitored over a period of time.

1) Death of a Close Relative of a Student

Depending on the closeness of the relationship between the student and the deceased the degree of support required may vary. In general, the following guidelines should be followed:

- Head of Key Stage to discuss proposed approach by school with appropriate family member.
- Assistant Headteacher in charge of Pastoral Care to inform Headteacher and discuss action to be taken.
- Assistant Headteacher in charge of Pastoral Care to advise appropriate staff of the situation and give an indication of the length of absence (if appropriate) of the student.
- Advice may be given to staff by Pastoral team on how to support student on his/her return to school.
- It may also be appropriate to speak to classmates and/or school friends in on how best they might help in supporting the student on his/her return to school.
- Assistant Headteacher in charge of Pastoral Care should carefully consider whether appropriate members of staff should visit or contact the family during their period of mourning.
- They should also consider whether or not the school should be represented at the funeral.
- Assistant Headteacher in charge of Pastoral Care to meet with student on his/her return to school and offer appropriate support where required.
- Assistant Headteacher in charge of Pastoral Care to regularly monitor the student over the next few months.

2) Death of a Student

- On hearing of the death of a student, the Headteacher should meet immediately with the Pastoral Care Team to plan the school's response. Decisions as to which group(s) of pupils should be informed will need to be made e.g. classmates, close friends, year group, friends of brothers and sisters of the deceased.
- With great sensitivity, one of the above staff should be assigned to ascertain the circumstances of the death. Where possible he/she should discuss with a close family member how the school will be dealing with the bereavement.
- As soon as possible the Headteacher should inform all staff about the student's death. Staff should also be given details as to which groups of students will be informed, and when and how this is to occur. They should be advised of the details that the students will be told.
- **It should be strongly emphasised that normal school routine will be maintained as much as possible.** Obviously, if the death occurs near the end of term then consideration should be given as to whether certain extracurricular activities should be suspended (e.g. Merit Award activities, School Show etc.).
- Staff should also be asked to be vigilant and provide immediate information to Pastoral staff about students who may be showing signs of distress and who may need support.
- Pastoral staff should be made available to offer support. Other specialists, such as the school counsellor or local religious leaders, may also be asked to assist.
- The Headteacher, in discussion with the Pastoral Team, should decide as to whether appropriate members of staff (2 persons) should visit the family of the deceased.
- The Headteacher will also need to consider a selection process as to which members of staff and which pupils should attend the funeral. In this matter, the wishes of the family must be taken fully into account.
- The school should give due consideration to accompanying a small number of close friends and classmates to the funeral. Staff accompanying these students must be prepared to offer comfort and support as required. Obviously it is essential that the school has adequate staff to supervise the students not attending the funeral. This may limit the number of staff who can attend.
- Should the death be of interest to the media then the Headteacher must formulate any response in conjunction with the Authority Press Office. It may be necessary to advise staff and students not to speak to the media and to avoid making innocent comments that might be misconstrued.
- Where appropriate the Assistant Headteacher in charge of Pastoral Care should inform relevant external groups such as UCAS, SQA of the death. It may be less traumatic for parents if results etc. were sent to the school in the first instance. If time permits this should be discussed with the deceased's family.

Death of a Member of Staff

- On hearing of the death of a member of staff, the Headteacher should meet with members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to plan the school's response. At this meeting the method of informing other staff will be decided and decisions as to how and when pupils will be informed will also need to be made.
- The School Improvement Partner will also have to be informed and consulted as to how the school will deal with the bereavement.
- Adequate support for staff and pupils must be available. The expertise of Pastoral staff and the school counsellor should be more than adequate to provide support for pupils. In general, staff members will be able to support each other but it may be appropriate to consult the Authority's Staff Welfare Officer to provide more specialist resources.
- Attendance of staff and pupils at the funeral should, where possible, be discussed with the deceased's family.

- The Headteacher, in conjunction with the School Improvement Partner, should ensure that as many staff as possible are able to attend the funeral. This may involve the school having to put special timetabling arrangements in place.

Death of a Close Relative of a Member of Staff

- The death of a partner, child or parent of a member of staff needs to be dealt with sensitively. It is essential that the member of staff is supported throughout the immediate period of mourning and on his/her return to school.
- On hearing of the death, the Headteacher must meet with other members of the SLT to decide how other members of staff are to be informed. (If e-mail is to be used to give any details, e.g. time of funeral, then it is essential that the staff member does not receive the e-mail.)
- The Headteacher should contact the staff member as soon as possible and convey their condolences and offer whatever support is appropriate.
- It is unlikely that many of the pupils will have to be informed but if so the Headteacher, in conjunction with the SLT, will decide on the appropriate method(s) to be used.
- Attendance of staff (and any pupils where appropriate) at the funeral should, where possible, be discussed with the staff member. If pupils are attending the funeral they should be closely supervised and supported by experienced staff.
- The Head Teacher should ensure that as many staff as possible who wish to attend the funeral are allowed to attend. This may involve putting special timetable arrangements into place. It is important, however, that the school should operate as normally as is possible.
- On his/her return to work the SLT and other close colleagues must ensure that the member of staff is given appropriate support. The nature and degree of this support will vary depending on the circumstances.

Monitoring and Evaluating the Policy

After a bereavement, the school will review what was done at each stage and will evaluate the actions taken to see what was effective and what might have been done better. This will enable the school to plan for the future. Experience can also inform other programmes of the school such as those in PSHCE or form time activities. It may also lead to additional supports being put in place.