BEREAVEMENT

POLICY

CRUMLIN
INTEGRATED
COLLEGE

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1. Aims

This bereavement policy aims to:

- Set out clear guidelines for how Crumlin Integrated College will respond to a death within our school community.
- Establish a timely communication plan that balances transparency and the interests of the school community with the privacy and wishes of the family.
- Identify effective procedures for supporting pupils and staff experiencing bereavement.
- Define the roles and responsibilities of key staff members and the Board of Governors.
- Provide a clear framework to support pupils and staff returning to Crumlin Integrated College following a bereavement.
- Identify best practices for supporting pupils and/or members of the Crumlin Integrated College community.

2.1 The Principal

The Principal has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and for delegating any responsibilities under this policy to other members of staff.

The Principal will:

- Liaise with the family of the deceased
- Where appropriate, communicate details of a death to pupils and staff as set out in this policy, or activate communication teams
- Respond to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death
- Participate in any multi-agency reviews as requested
- Lead reintegration meetings for pupils or staff returning to school after a bereavement
- Arrange for monitoring and support of the pastoral support team or any individual staff members who are supporting bereaved pupils or staff

2.2 Pastoral support staff

The pastoral support team has responsibility for monitoring and supporting bereaved pupils and staff members (including before their bereavement, where relevant – for example, in the case of terminal illness).

The pastoral support team will:

- Provide direct support to bereaved pupils and staff
- Signpost to external support available to bereaved pupils and staff
- Organise safe spaces for bereaved members of the school community to take a time out
- Arrange for the attendance of staff representatives at funerals (where permitted)
- Maintain a calendar of dates and holidays that may be particularly difficult for bereaved pupils or staff and ensure they’re supported on those days
- Provide additional support during significant transitions – for example, when moving up to the next year group or transitioning to a new school

2.3 Governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy and supporting the headteacher.

The governing board will:

- Undertake regular monitoring of how the school is supporting the bereaved, and the staff who support them – for example, through a link governor focusing on bereavement, who meets with the headteacher or pastoral team.
- Monitor the headteacher's emotional wellbeing – for example, through meetings between the headteacher and chair.
- Assist the headteacher, where required, in responding to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death
- Where necessary, arrange for another staff member to take the lead if the headteacher is not available to respond to a death immediately

3. Provision for supporting staff who support the bereaved

Supporting bereaved pupils/staff can be very stressful for staff who may already be struggling with their own reactions and emotions. At certain points in time, some members of staff may be more vulnerable due to circumstances in their own lives. Ensure that they have relevant information from support services.

Our school will:

- *Support bereaved staff and acknowledge they may be struggling with their own reactions and emotions while supporting pupils;*
- *Plan for informal mutual support to give staff an opportunity to share feelings and reactions.*
- *Give people time to attend the funeral, if appropriate.*
- *Offer general training for all staff.*
- *Be aware of all supporting information and resources available.*

4. Immediate actions following a death

4.1 Clarifying information and the wishes of the family

Procedure

- **Contact the Family:** Speak to the family to offer condolences and confirm accurate facts (ensuring consent for what can be shared to avoid speculation).
- **Contact the Education Authority (EA) Critical Response Team:** The school Principal or head of Safeguarding will also make contact with the EA Critical Response Team in order to inform and seek support where needed.

4.2 Sharing the news with staff

Responsibility

- The Principal, Assistant Principal, or, in the absence of both, a member of the Senior Team will be responsible for informing staff and explaining available support.

Procedure

- **Call a Meeting:** Send an email to all staff directing them to an urgent staff meeting (or a virtual meeting if the school is closed).
- **Inform Staff:** Hold the briefing as soon as possible to share the facts and outline the support available to staff.

4.3 Sharing the news with pupils

Responsibility

- A familiar adult or class/form teacher will share the news with pupils, supported by Year Group Leaders and the Senior Leadership Team.

Procedure (During Term Time)

1. Prepare a Script: Senior leadership will provide a clear, age-appropriate script for staff to use when delivering the news.

2. Identify Vulnerable Pupils: Identify pupils who may be particularly affected (e.g., close friends or recently bereaved pupils) and inform/support them first.

3. Decide Location: Select an appropriate, safe setting to inform pupils (e.g., standard classrooms or tutor rooms rather than large assemblies).

4. Deliver the News: A familiar teacher will share the facts with pupils in small groups as soon as possible using the prepared script.

Procedure (During School Holidays / School Closures)

1. **Parent Notification:** Send an email, letter, or emergency app notification to parents/carers informing them of the news, including links to support guidance for home.
2. **Offer On-Site/Virtual Support:** If necessary, open a designated safe space at the school (or host a secure virtual meeting) for vulnerable pupils to meet with staff/support teams.
3. **First Day Back Plan:** Brief staff before pupils return and share the news in small group sessions on the first morning back for any pupils who were not reached.

4.4 Informing parents/carers

Responsibility

- The Principal and Senior Leadership Team will oversee all written and digital communications sent to parents and carers.

Procedure

1. Draft Communication: SLT will draft a formal letter or message using facts confirmed directly with the family.

2. Key Information Included:

    - Accurate details of the news (in line with the family's wishes).

    - Steps taken in school during the day to inform and support pupils.

    - Support available to pupils within school.

    - External helpline contacts and guidance for parents on supporting bereaved children at home.

3. Distribution (Term Time): Send the letter home with pupils at the end of the school day and issue a copy via the school's electronic communication system/email.

4. Distribution (School Holidays / Closures): Issue the notification immediately via email, SMS, or the school app, with direct links to support resources and emergency contacts

4.5 Responding to specific causes of death

Some deaths need to be handled more sensitively due to their potential to cause fear, anger or imitation.

- If the death is due to contagious disease, we will follow procedures as determined by our local health protection team

4.6 Responding to the media

In the event that a death that affects the school raises media interest, we will respond in the following manner:

All members of staff will be advised not to respond to journalists and to refer all enquiries to the Principal, who will make a considered response.

5. Follow-up actions and support following a death

5.1 Support for pupils and staff

Pupils and staff may require support to grieve in the initial days and weeks following a death.

Our school will:

- *Acknowledge what has happened*
- *Ask our pupils how we can help*
- *Be flexible and understanding*
- *Create a supportive environment*
- *Maintain routine*
- *Listen with our eyes, ears and heart.*

Our school will offer:

- *A routine, which can have a stabilising effect*
- *Neutral space and people to share their feelings without the worry of upsetting a loved one;*
- *Time for the pupils to be themselves without feeling guilty (being with friends, time to play in a safe space outside the home environment);*
- *Regular communication with home, providing reassurance about behaviour and general well-being, ensuring the child or young person is managing their grief;*
- *Access to appropriate resources via Class/Form teacher*
- *Preparation time for children and young people to discuss what to say and how to behave when the bereaved child or young person returns to school;*
- *Time for staff to be aware of changes in behaviour that may be related to the death;*
- *An individual link person to support the pupils when necessary;*
- *A suitable place in school for pupils who need some space if too upset to stay in the classroom and people to whom they can go for support.*

5.2 Tributes and condolences

Location & Supervision

- Set up any temporary tribute area or book of condolence in a safe, accessible location where pupils can be appropriately supervised.

Removal Procedure

1. Consultation: Consult with staff and pupils prior to removing any temporary tribute or closing a condolence book.

2. Advance Notice: Give clear advance notice to the school community before the tribute is removed to prepare pupils and staff beforehand.

5.4 Funerals

We will consult the family as appropriate, to confirm:

- Whether members of staff and/or pupils are welcome to attend the funeral or memorial service
- How condolences should be made and how staff and pupils can contribute

If staff are welcome to attend the funeral and wish to do so:

Consultation with the Family

The school will consult with the family to confirm:

- Funeral details and whether staff, pupils, and parents are welcome to attend.
- How the family would like condolences to be expressed.

Staff Attendance

- Staff wishing to attend should speak directly with the Principal or Assistant Principal to request this.
- Permission will be granted based on maintaining safe staffing levels and appropriate cover in school.

Pupil Attendance

- The school will not organise, supervise, or transport pupils to the funeral.
- If agreed by the family, funeral details will be shared with parents and carers.
- Parents/carers who wish for their child to attend must accompany them and inform the school in advance to request an authorised absence.
- Designated school representatives (e.g., SLT) will attend to represent the school community.

6. Support for pupils returning to school after bereavement

Whether a pupil has been away from school following a personal bereavement or after a death affecting the whole school community, the school will support them in their return to school and for as long as necessary afterwards.

6.1 Reintegration meeting

The School Principal / Head of Pastoral Care will meet with the bereaved pupil and their parents/carers to discuss how best to manage a return to school.

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- Determine whether the pupil is emotionally ready to return to the classroom either full time or with adjustments to the timetable to allow for a phased return
- Address any concerns the pupil and their parents/carers have about the return to school
- Consult with the pupil about how or even if they want their classmates to know of the death (where relevant)
- Open lines of communication between the pupil and relevant staff to ensure support should the pupil feel overwhelmed
- Open lines of communication between the school and the pupil's parents/carers to coordinate support

- Consider any additional support needed for a pupil who is vulnerable or has special educational needs (SEN) or a disability

6.2 Ongoing support

- We will maintain regular contact with the pupil's parents/carers to monitor how the pupil is coping
- We acknowledge significant dates or holidays may be especially difficult and will monitor these dates and ensure additional support is available, e.g. bereavement team calendar.
- We will take care to manage changes for bereaved pupils by preparing them in advance (where possible) and taking extra steps to support necessary transitions

7. Support for staff returning to school after bereavement

Whether a staff member has been away from school following a personal bereavement or after a death affecting the whole school community, the school will support them in their return to school and for as long as necessary afterwards.

7.1 Reintegration meeting

The school Principal or Assistant Principal will meet with the bereaved staff member to discuss how best to manage a return to school.

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- Determine whether the staff member is ready to return to work and the best way to make that return (e.g. a phased return to work or a temporary change in duties)
- Address any concerns the staff member may have about the return to school
- Consult with the staff member about how or even if they want their pupils and colleagues to know of the death (where relevant)
- Set guidelines for communication between the staff member and their line manager to monitor and support the staff member

7.2 Ongoing support

We acknowledge that grief can have an impact on a staff member's physical and mental health, which can then go on to impact their performance.

We also recognise that grieving is highly personal and that there can't be a one-size-fits-all solution for monitoring and supporting a bereaved person.

We will work with each individual to create a system of monitoring and support that works for that person.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Principal in consultation with staff and pupils. Consideration will be given to any developments and will take into account the learning from ongoing practice and experience. Any changes made will be shared with the staff and presented to the Board of Governors for approval.

Appendix: useful contacts

ORGANISATION	CONTACT DETAILS
Child Bereavement UK	• Helpline: 0800 02 888 40 • https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us
Winston's Wish	• Helpline: 08088 020 021 • https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/
Cruse Bereavement Care	• Helpline: 0808 808 1677 • https://www.cruse.org.uk/about-cruse/contact-us
Mind	• Infoline (information and signposting to further help): 0300 123 3393 • Further contacts: https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/useful-contacts/