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# BEREAVEMENT

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## PREFACE

Chiltern Hills Academy is a learning environment at the heart of its community. We encourage every person in our community to:

**Create, Aspire and Excel to 'Live life in all its fullness' (John 10:10)**

We achieve this through our dedication to the seven Christian values of love, hope, self-discipline, compassion, forgiveness, respect and honesty.

We are a community in which staff, students and parents work collaboratively to develop a learning environment and organisation which is spiritual, safe, innovative, creative and exciting. All members of the Academy are motivated and inspired by the vision to give their best and to play a full part in the life of the school and in their own developing lives.

The Governors at Chiltern Hills Academy are committed to achieving the vision and values. They oversee and monitor this policy to ensure that this is being achieved.

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

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. Therefore, it is important for a school to reflect upon an appropriate response to bereavement and to develop flexible contingency plans that reflect how the Academy could or should respond in a tragic situation.

## WHEN A DEATH OCCURS

The Principal, or in his absence the nominated Vice Principal, will be the primary point of contact with a family when a death has occurred. The Principal may consult and seek the assistance of other members of the pastoral staff in supporting the bereaved.

The Principal will gather factual information regarding the death and will consult with the family regarding their wishes in sharing the information with the school community. It is important that factual information is shared in a timely manner so that assumptions and rumours are not spread, as they can only add to the family's distress.

It is essential that all staff are informed straight away, ideally before students. Students should be told as soon as possible. This is best done in familiar groups by someone they know. Staff will need to have guidance on words to use and approach to take. Staff are encouraged to seek to identify students who may be particularly vulnerable or likely to experience PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). For example, someone who may have witnessed the death may require special attention.

Letters may be sent home. The contents of the letter and the distribution list must be agreed by the parents and Academy. See Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

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It will be the responsibility of the Principal to ensure that the following procedures are put in place:

- The emails of the deceased are read and passed on to the relevant member of staff
- The email account of the deceased is terminated with an automatic forwarding address
- The pigeon hole for the deceased is cleared and removed
- The name of the deceased is removed from internal email circulation lists
- The personal belongings of the deceased are gathered and sent on to a family member.

## **THE DEATH OF A STUDENT**

In the case of the death of a student appropriate pastoral support should be provided for the whole school community. The SLT and other pastoral staff should be deployed appropriately to provide counselling and comfort. This may include pastoral support being available at designated areas and times during the school day. A book of remembrance should be set up in an appropriate location where the bereaved can come to express their grief and loss.

Services of remembrance may be offered at various times. Support for staff who are directly involved with grieving students is important and staff should have the opportunity to meet in an agreed meeting room 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 is involved in reporting on the death, the Principal will consult with staff regarding an official statement on behalf of the school.

The structure and regularity of the school day is important to maintain but some flexibility may be required. If a student is too upset to attend lessons, they should be excused to go to the medical room.

## **THE DEATH OF A MEMBER OF STAFF**

In the case of the death of a member of staff, appropriate pastoral support should be provided for the whole school community. The SLT and other pastoral staff should be deployed appropriately to provide counselling and comfort. This may include pastoral support being available at designated areas and times during the school day. A book of remembrance should be set up in an appropriate location where the bereaved can come to express their grief and loss. Services of remembrance may be offered at various times.

Special support including appropriate cover may be needed for staff who worked in the same department or who were particularly close to the deceased. The Principal will determine the appropriate period of time for these pastoral supports to continue. If the press is involved in reporting on the death, the Principal will consult with staff regarding an official statement on behalf of the Academy.

## **THE DEATH OF A STAFF MEMBER'S CHILD**

The death of a child is always a distressing event for anyone to go through and the member of staff can be assured of the Academy's full support in these circumstances.

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In accordance with Jack's Law, parents who suffer the devastating loss of a child will be entitled to two weeks' paid leave if they lose a child under the age of 18 or suffer a stillbirth from 24 weeks of their pregnancy. This will apply to all employees irrespective of how long they have been a member of staff.

Parents will be entitled to take the leave as either a single block of two weeks or as two separate blocks of one week each taken at different times across the first year after their child's death. This gives parents the option to take their leave at the times they need it most.

Parents with at least 26 weeks' continuous service and weekly average earnings over the lower earning limit (£118 per week for 2019 to 2020) will also be entitled to Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay (SPBP), paid at the statutory rate of £148.68 per week (for 2019 to 2020), or 90% of average weekly earnings where this is lower.

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

## **THE DEATH OF A STUDENT OR MEMBER OF STAFF WHILE AT THE ACADEMY 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 an emergency management 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 Nominated Vice Principal and the emergency management team will deal immediately with issues at the Academy 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.

## **MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed when there are changes in the law or at least every two years, to assess implementation and effectiveness.

This policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the Academy.

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## APPENDIX 1 TEMPLATE OF A LETTER INFORMING PARENTS OF THE DEATH OF A STUDENT

*Before sending a letter home to parents about the death of a student, permission must be gained from the child's parents.*

*The contents of the letter and the distribution list must be agreed by the parents and Academy.*

<Address>

<Date>

Dear Parents

Your child's class teacher/Form Tutor/ Academic Year Leader had the sad task of informing the children of the death of <Name>, a student in <Year>.

<Name> died from ..... . Sadly <Name> had been ill for a long time and died peacefully at home yesterday. He/She was a very popular member of the class and will be missed by everyone who knew him/her.

When someone dies it is normal for their friends and family to experience lots of different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try to answer their questions at school but if there is anything more that you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to telephone the school office and we would be more than happy to help you.

We will be arranging a memorial service in the school in the next few months as a means of celebrating <Name's> life.

Yours sincerely

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## APPENDIX 2 TEMPLATE OF A LETTER INFORMING PARENTS OF THE DEATH OF A MEMBER OF STAFF

<Address>

<Date>

Dear Parents

Your child's class teacher/Form Tutor/Academic Year Leader had the sad task of informing the children of the tragic death of <Name> who has been a teacher at this school for a number of years.

Our thoughts are with <Name .....>'s family at this time and, in an effort to try to respond to his/her death in a positive way, all the children have been informed.

When someone dies it is normal for family and friends to experience many different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion, and young people are likely to ask questions about the death that need to be answered honestly and factually in terms that they will understand.

The students have been told that their teachers are willing to try and answer their questions at school but if there is anything else you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to telephone the school office and we will be more than happy to help you.

Yours sincerely