

## BEREAVEMENT POLICY

### 1. Introduction

Although such an event is extremely rare, it is possible that at some point the College may experience the death of a student or member of staff. Equally, a student or member of staff may experience the bereavement of a family member or close friend. In such circumstances, it is important that the College acts as a source of support and care to both students and staff.

Bereavement may have a huge impact on the College community. It is important that the College is able to respond effectively to what may be a traumatic or tragic situation. This should be done in a way where disruption is kept to a minimum and individual students and staff feel valued and supported.

The primary points of contact in this policy are the **Principal** and/or the **Vice Principal** who will share information with the College community in a timely way.

### 2. The Death of a Student

#### A. Information and Support for Students

- i. Students in affected groups will be informed as soon as possible by either the Principal or Vice Principal. The wider student community will then be informed by email.
- ii. In general, there will be minimum disruption to the College timetable. The structure of the College day will be maintained, although there may be the need for some flexibility.
- iii. It will be important to liaise with relevant staff, tutors and college counsellors in order to identify who might be vulnerable, so that support is quickly put in place. Teaching staff and relevant support staff should be aware that because some students may feel they cannot currently attend classes, there will need to be flexibility as regards sitting mock exams and providing extended deadline dates for homework/non-examined assessment. Initial reactions to grief may range from tears, shutting down, strong and sudden anger, nightmares, as well as no obvious reaction. Young people will often gain the support they need from their social groups and families. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' reactions to grief. Feelings are fluid and can change over time. For some people the impact is not fully felt until much later, often around the anniversary or through another loss and it is at that time they may need support.
- iv. The wider student community will be made aware of the college counselling service that is available to them. It may be necessary to 'fast track' particular students identified as being in urgent need of support.

- v. A book of remembrance will be set up in an appropriate location where students and staff can come to express their condolences. If appropriate, a meeting of remembrance for relevant groups of students may also be held.
- vi. Any further information (e.g. funeral service, etc.) will be communicated to students in a timely way.
- vii. Crucially, it is important that having identified any affected students, college staff provide continued support in the weeks and months ahead. In particular, students affected by bereavement should have their progress monitored carefully over time and offered appropriate support.

#### **B. Information and Support for Staff**

- i. An announcement will be made to staff at Staff Briefing by either the Principal or Vice Principal, followed by an email. Staff must adhere to the wording of these announcements if students enquire about the death. This is to prevent potentially unwarranted communication from spreading.
- ii. The Principal will also inform the Chair of Governors, who will in turn inform the Governing Body.
- iii. The Principal will formally write to the student's family to express sympathy on behalf of the College.
- iv. If the media are involved in reporting on the death, the Principal will consult with the Chair of Governors regarding an official statement on behalf of the College. On no account should staff communicate directly with the media or discuss the student's death on social media.
- v. The SIS Manager will liaise with the SIS team to ensure that relevant college records are amended. It may also be necessary for the SIS Manager to relocate classes to different teaching rooms.
- vi. Support for staff who have been directly involved with grieving students will be important. They should have the opportunity to express their condolences in the book of remembrance or at any dedicated college services. They should also have the opportunity to meet to share their feelings and reactions. Staff may wish to request external support from the Human Resources Manager and these requests will be dealt with sensitively and on a strictly confidential basis. A member of staff may feel they are not able to attend work in the immediate aftermath of the death; requests for compassionate leave will be dealt with sensitively and on an individual basis.

### **3. The Death of a Member of Staff**

In the case of the death of a member of staff, the points detailed in sections A-B, above, will still apply and appropriate support will be provided for the whole college community.

Great sensitivity and care will need to be taken in determining how lessons and/or work duties will be covered immediately following the death. Special support, including appropriate cover, may be needed for staff and students who worked particularly closely with the deceased.

#### **4. The Death of a Family Member/Close Friend**

In the case of the death of a family member or close friend, if the death happens whilst the student or member of staff is at college, a representative for the family may wish to contact the student/member of staff directly or come to the college to break the news in person. Alternatively, the representative for the family may ask for the student/member of staff to be informed by the Principal or Vice Principal.

Before notifying fellow students/staff, the Principal or Vice Principal should speak with the family of the bereaved to determine what information should be given to peers/colleagues. Peers/colleagues will be informed on how the bereaved student/member of staff wants to manage what has happened (i.e. speak openly about the death or not discuss any details at all).

Following the death of a family member/close friend, it can be expected that the bereaved student/member of staff may have a reduced capacity for college work. The bereaved student/member of staff may also require extra support at a later stage, when they have returned to college.

#### **5. Funeral Procedure**

When a funeral has been planned for the deceased, it is essential that the College is sensitive to the family's culture and abides by their wishes. The family may welcome involvement of members of the College community but, equally, may wish to keep the funeral private.

The Principal or Vice Principal will identify which staff and students may want to attend and the practicalities of issues such as staff cover and transport. The Principal or Vice 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.

*“This policy has been impact assessed to ensure it complies with all aspects of Equality and Diversity. Members are reassured that this policy is compliant with current equality legislation”.*