

Trauma, Bereavement or Stress Policy

EBN Trust

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1 Introduction

The following is a series of guidelines in the event of a youngster suffering parental breakdown, a bereavement of a parent, sibling or close relative or friend, or who is suffering severe stress over something else that has happened. Such procedures should not necessarily be implemented unquestioningly, since there will always be the need to respond by heart rather than by letter according to each individual case.

2 Preliminary Statements

- i. The overriding principle is a course of support that seeks the well-being of the child.
- ii. It is recognised that not all students respond the same way to parental breakdown or the loss of a loved one. Some youngsters display their grief publicly, while others carry it within in an attempt to distance themselves from further pain. In general, the first response is more psychologically healthy than the second.
- iii. Youngsters may need counselling, the variable factor is when. For some, there will be the need to counsel as soon as possible after the loss, for others this may be too soon. Close monitoring with guardians, friends and carers is essential, so that the right time may be chosen for the youngster to begin talking and off-loading.
- iv. When counselling a young person having undergone the separation of parents or bereavement, it may not be possible to predict the outcome. Dealing with heavy issues like bereavement is to challenge the natural response of denial, and this is traumatic in itself. A planned programme is therefore more beneficial than spontaneous support.

3 Death of a Close relative of a student or parental breakdown procedures

3.1 When it has been learnt that a youngster has suffered parental breakdown or bereavement, information sharing will be the first task:

- i) inform the Vice Principal and the personal tutor and complete a referral to the academy's internal referral panel (EBN Behaviour and SEN Strategy)
- ii) Vice Principal to make an announcement in Staff Briefing so that staff are aware;
- iii) make clear to the person informing the Academy that we want to offer support

3.2 The tutor and Vice Principal will liaise over monitoring the student and there must be regular reviews with appropriate staff until such time that the student has come to terms with the loss (in a relative sense) and/or the need for counselling has ceased.

3.3 Where appropriate a Counsellor will engage the young person in a programme of counselling.

3.4. In cases (after full negotiation with parents or carers) where the youngster is displaying extreme emotional behavioural symptoms which indicate that the grieving is requiring the input of a Clinical Psychologist, the Counsellor will promptly refer the case to an appropriate agency.

3.5 Some families will engage professional therapeutic support from other agencies and care will be taken to ensure that what is done in the school is appropriate in relation to that. It is recognised that some parents may send their youngster to the academy prematurely in order that they or their youngsters may learn to cope by getting back into normal routines quickly. While this might be a right course of action for the family, it will nevertheless leave a youngster prone to become spontaneously upset or difficult to manage.

4 Death of a Student

4.1 On hearing of the death of a student the headteacher should meet immediately with the Senior Leadership 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.

4.2 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 academy will be dealing with the bereavement.

4.3 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 extra- curricular activities should be suspended (e.g. Merit Award activities, Academy Show etc.)

4.4 Staff should also be asked to be vigilant and provide immediate information to Senior Leadership Team about students who may be showing signs of distress and who may need support. Senior Leadership should be made available to offer support. Other specialists such as the school nurse, school counsellor or the school psychologist may also be asked to assist.

4.5 The Headteacher, in discussion with the Senior Leadership Team, should decide as to whether appropriate members of staff should visit the family of the deceased.

4.6 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 academy 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 academy has adequate staff to supervise the students not attending the funeral. This may limit the number of staff who can attend.

4.7 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.

4.8 Where appropriate Senior Leadership 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 academy, in the first instance. If time permits this should be discussed with the deceased's family.

5 Death of a Member of Staff

5.1 On hearing of the death of a member of staff the Headteacher should meet with members of the SLT to plan the academy's response. At this meeting the method of informing other staff will be decided. Decisions as to how and when pupils will be informed will also need to be made. The academy's Pastoral Educational Officer will also have to be informed and consulted as to how the school will deal with the bereavement.

5.2 Adequate support for staff and pupils must be available. The expertise of Pastoral Care, school counsellor, and educational psychologist 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.

5.3 Attendance of staff and pupils at the funeral should, where possible, be discussed with the deceased's family. The Headteacher, in conjunction, with the SLT. should ensure that as many staff as possible are able to attend the funeral. This may involve the academy having to put special timetabling arrangements in place.

6 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 the academy.

6.1 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.)

6.2 The Headteacher should contact the staff member as soon as possible and convey his condolences and offer whatever support is appropriate.

6.3 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.

6.4 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.

6.5 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.

Signed(Chair) Dated