



*ST. PAUL'S ACADEMY
BEREAVEMENT POLICY*

St. Paul's Academy

Bereavement Policy

This policy should be read alongside:

- Education Commission (Catholic Diocese of Southwark) Bereavement Guidance to Schools on the death of a member of staff, student or parent (extracts in Appendix 2)
- St. Paul's Academy Emotional Health & Wellbeing Policy
- St. Paul's Academy Critical Incident Policy
- St. Paul's Academy Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

This policy has also been written with due regard to Government advice during the Coronavirus Covid 19 crisis.

Copies of this policy and policies listed above are available on the school website.

'For this God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our guide even to the end.' Psalm 48:14

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1. Introduction & Rationale

A death can affect the school community in many different ways. We understand that bereavement is an experience which will be faced by all members of our community at some point. It is more difficult when the loss is of a member of our school community; one of our students or a member of staff.

We believe that it is an issue that needs to be addressed openly. Adults and students benefit from being kept informed following a death. This policy will deal with bereavement support following the death of a student or staff member, and will also address support for students and staff who are returning to school following a bereavement.

At St. Paul's Academy, we believe students and staff need to be supported when they experience bereavement and other significant losses in the course of their lives while they are at school or work. The Principal and Governors of the academy are committed to supporting the emotional health and

wellbeing of students and staff, and wish to ensure that our procedures and practice following any bereavement are a reflection of our positive and caring ethos.

This policy upholds the school's ethos and Mission Statement.

2. Aims

- To ensure that all members of the school community receive the support that they need during a difficult time.
- To ensure that all members of staff have clear expectations regarding the way that our school responds to a death and to give all staff confidence in adopting agreed procedures.
- To provide a framework for all staff to be able to work through their feelings so that they will be able to prioritise the needs of their students and other members of the school community in order to be able to deal sensitively and compassionately with difficult and upsetting circumstances.
- To ensure that St. Paul's Academy is a place where students and families can rely on for emotional and spiritual support and guidance for as long as they need to.
- To ensure that designated members of staff work together with the range of outside agencies, as appropriate.

3. SECTION 1 - The Death of a Student or Member of Staff

(See also: Flow Chart-Appendix 1)

The first response from any member of staff upon finding out about a death of a staff member or student is to inform the Principal (Vice Principal or Chaplain) immediately. If the death occurs onsite, the principal (or vice principal) will lead the response and follow the guidelines outlined in the Critical Incident Policy.

During uncertain times e.g. prolonged school closure (e.g. during COVID 19 crisis), the school may be notified in an infinite number of ways. It is vital importance that, other than informing the principal, members of staff must not take any further action until instructed to do so by the principal. The dissemination of information is the responsibility of the principal and will be handled with care following the agreed procedures outlined below. The same procedures apply should a death of a student or staff member occur at an offsite activity, or during a school trip.

Roles and responsibilities

The Principal and Chaplain will be the main point of contact for the family and will direct other members of staff to take on additional duties, as appropriate.

Informing staff

- The Principal will inform SLT and school Chaplain, and a staff briefing will be arranged as soon as possible.
- In the event that all staff are not onsite, those present at the briefing will be asked to refrain from contacting colleagues, students, parents & carers, or other professionals until the principal informs all staff via email.
- If the news involves a student, particular care will be given to inform form tutor, HOY and other key linked staff e.g. SEND team or key support staff. This may be by telephone if they are not on site.

- If the death is of a member of staff, every effort will be made to make first contact those colleagues known to be close friends of the deceased.
- Staff will be asked not to post anything on social media.

Informing Parents & Carers

- The Principal will inform parents and carers via In-Touch. If the school is closed and the news involves a student, the principal will ask parents or carers to inform their children.
- Parents and Carers will be signposted to the school website where bereavement support and resources will be posted.
- The Principal will advise students not to post on social media for an agreed amount of time to allow for others to hear the news appropriately.

Informing Other Parties

- The chaplain will inform and maintain contact with the diocese and local clergy, including advising them of the steps taken by the school.
- The principal will inform the Local Authority and the Board of Governors.
- The school will not make an announcement via school social media.
- In the event that the press contact school, staff will be given a uniform response (sent by the principal). If appropriate, the Principal will prepare a news statement which may include the text from the letter sent to parents and carers. Liaison with the individual's family is essential regarding media response, in order to protect their privacy and wishes. A tribute may be sent to the press, after the funeral, if the family members of the deceased wish for this to happen.
- In the event of the death of a child, the school will be invited to liaise with Children's Services, health and other services, including attendance at a joint agency review meeting. The DSL / Safeguarding team will prepare the response and represent the school at this meeting.

Support for Students and staff

- Where possible, there should be a short prayer service or assembly with the year group (in the case of the death of a student). This should take place as soon as possible. This will include a brief account of what has happened and an opportunity to pray for the person who has died and for their family and friends.
- Students will be offered the full range of emotional support available through Pastoral Teams, Chaplaincy, Inclusion and Mentoring teams. Appropriate onwards referrals will be made e.g. for bereavement counselling / CAMHS support.
- Staff to be encouraged to support one another, especially within their teams. The chaplain and other named members of staff will be available for individual and emotional support, either onsite or remotely. Staff will also be reminded of lists of organisations and avenues of support as outlined in the Emotional Health & Wellbeing Policy.

Support for Students during School Closure

- As above, during school holidays or a prolonged school closure (e.g. during Covid 19 crisis), parents and carers will have been contacted and asked to talk to their children about the

death. Bereavement support and resources will be placed on the school website and families will be signposted to these, as well as the spiritual guidance on our website.

- Heads of Year and Pastoral Teams (supported by Chaplain & Inclusion Team) will continue to send messages of support to students via emails and individual telephone calls, who will also be signposted to the website for specific bereavement support, if needed.
- Staff will be expected to follow the usual wellbeing support procedures (**'Look / Listen / Link'**) and refer students to the Inclusion team if they are concerned about their wellbeing e.g. if the student does not respond to contact from the school.
- Students will be reminded to contact their mentors and pastoral teams by emailing the school office@stpauls.greenwich.sch.uk (and ask for a call back) if they want to talk to a specific member of staff.
- Students will also be signposted to youth counselling services e.g. 'The Mix' and 'Kooth'.
- Students will be encouraged to support one another, and especially to look out for those who may not be in touch with others or are socially isolated.
- In the event of closure (e.g. during COVID 19 crisis), spiritual guidance will be placed on the website and the chaplain will arrange for a mass to be live streamed from a local parish with a link available for students and staff to access at home.

Prayers and remembrance

- The chaplain will prepare prayer resources which will be available to the whole school community (see appendix).
- The principal and school chaplain will be in touch with the family regarding how the school will be represented at the funeral.
- Plans will be made with the family for a memorial Mass to be held in the school on an agreed date.
- Plans will be made for staff and students to come together collaboratively to plan a suitable memorial to honour and remember the student or staff member who has died.

4. Section 2 – Supporting a Bereaved Student or Member of Staff

Returning to school after a bereavement

Students

- Staff at school will be guided by the student and their family, who will be consulted at every stage regarding the school's level of involvement.
- Bereaved students are met by the chaplain when they return to the school and offered ongoing support for as long as it is needed and/or when the student is ready to access support
- Students who request a 'light touch' style of support will be monitored by their pastoral team who will notify families, the chaplain and relevant support staff regarding any changes in behaviour.
- Students may be referred to the school counsellor or specialist bereavement services outside of school.

Staff

- Supporting a bereaved member of staff is similar to the type of support that would be offered to a student.
- Staff would be supported and monitored by their learning zone colleagues or teams.
- The chaplain or another named member of staff will also be available to provide emotional and spiritual support, should the member of staff wish to be supported.
- Staff members will also be signposted to the free counselling available via the school's Healthshield programme as well other sources of support (listed on the Wellbeing Policy).

Guidance on Speaking to students and colleagues about grief

Be honest – Death is not an easy subject for anyone to talk about. Model the fact that difficult feelings are ok, and totally normal. If you are upset, do not be afraid to be empathic but manage your emotions.

Use clear language – Trying to avoid the death by using phrases such as 'your loss' and 'gone to a better place' can be frustrating. Simply use language which is real and clear; 'I was really sorry to hear that your Dad died last week, how are you feeling?' or 'I'm sorry to hear about.....'

Expect questions but don't feel pressured to provide immediate answers – Recognise that every death and every reaction to it is unique.

Don't assume anything – Ask the student or colleague how they feel, rather than projecting feelings that you might expect them to have.

Allow time and space – Staff and students need time to work out how they feel and this is different for everyone. Be prepared for questions and feelings over days and weeks as they move in and out of grief.

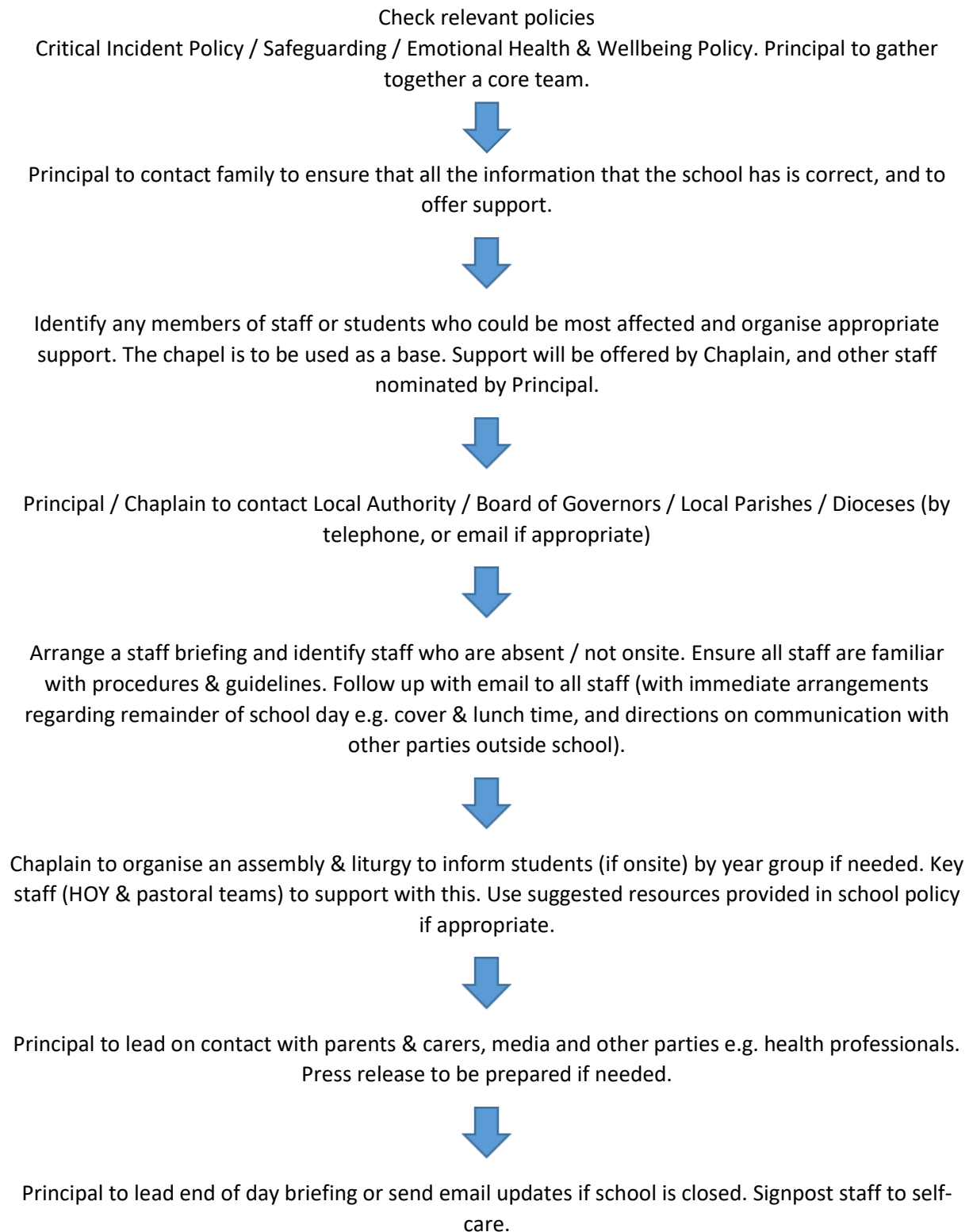
Act Early to prevent rumours – In the case of an unexpected death, it is important to act early to prevent rumours and protect the family involved.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Principal, Chaplain & Inclusion Team will carefully monitor and evaluate the impact and effectiveness of this policy, especially following any application of the policy.

This policy was written in April 2020.

APPENDIX 1 – Sudden Bereavement Flow Chart



APPENDIX 2 – *Adapted from Education Commission – Bereavement Guidance to schools*

(including template letters / suggested resources prayers)

Introduction

The death of a student or member of staff can cause great shock to all concerned.

Mobile phones and social media can quickly be the means of effective communication, but they can also be the cause of speculation, often before the school has had a chance to provide information to the community.

SAMPLE LETTERS

The following letters have been offered by the Education Commission as samples to be adapted according to the needs of the school. N.B. Before sending or posting, it is important to check the accuracy of the information you are planning to send, and please ensure you ask a colleague to proof read.

Parents & carers will always need to know how the school has responded to a death in their community, and what information has been given to their child.

This will include:

- Factual information about the circumstances of the death
- Information about how their child may respond to the death
- Practical suggestions to help their child to understand the news

SAMPLE 1 – To inform parents / carers of the death of a member of staff (as a result of an illness)

Dear Parents/Carers,

It is with great sadness that I write to inform you that over the weekend, _____, a highly respected and much loved member of our teaching staff, has died. S/he had become increasingly poorly over the last few days and in the end, died peacefully, with his/her family at his/her side.

Our students have been told of his/her death today and, as anticipated, a number of them are experiencing significant distress. The nature of the illness _____ was explained to the students and that sometimes people die from this illness.

I have been in touch with the family and have expressed our condolences on behalf of the entire school community.

I hope that in the weeks to come we will find an appropriate way to celebrate the life that s/he had with us here at St. Paul's Academy, together with the significant contribution that s/he has made.

Personal end.

SAMPLE 2 – To inform parents / carers of the death of a student

Dear Parents/Carers,

It is with great sadness that I write to inform you of the tragic death of one of our students, _____ from year ____ . We learned this morning that _____ had died after (a short illness / tragic accident or other appropriate phase). Mr and Mrs _____ informed me that _____ died peacefully in hospital last night.

Members of staff have informed our students this morning during and special assemblies have been held. Lessons were suspended for a short while to allow _____'s year group to gather together to express our individual and shared sorrow at this news.

A number of our students and staff members will attend _____'s funeral. It is also our intention, with Mr & Mrs _____'s permission, to hold a 'Celebration of _____'s life at a later date, so that all of _____'s friends and year group can be involved.

I would also like to signpost students and their families to our school website where you will find a selection of resources to support your child during their time of loss.

Personal end.

SAMPLE 3 – To inform staff & governors of the death of a student

MARK URGENT Further to this morning's staff briefing and telephone conversation with our chair of governors, I can now confirm the sad news of _____'s death. As colleagues were informed earlier, _____ died (provide factual information.....)

I have spoken to _____'s family and expressed our deepest sorrow and sympathy.

All students have been informed by their Heads of Year via special assemblies / In Touch email to parents and carers who have been asked to speak to their children and will be signposted to where further support can be accessed via our website. (Provide specific information).

Please can I ask that if any member of staff is contacted by the media they should not comment or respond. Instead they should provide _____'s details who will take the lead on all requests for information.

Needless to say, we are all deeply shocked and saddened to receive this news. Arrangements have yet to be made for the funeral and a school memorial service but I will, of course, inform all staff and governors once these are known. In the meantime, the school chapel will be made available for quiet reflection / the chaplain and Inclusion team will be available to support students.

I would like to remind staff that you will find the 'Bereavement Policy' which provides guidance for times such as these in the staff shared area and on the school website.

Further information will be made available via our ongoing staff briefings.

Please take care and stay safe.

Personal end.

School assemblies at times of bereavement

Words and Prayers

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

Amen.

Eternal rest grant unto _____ O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon him/her. May s/he rest in peace. Amen....And may his/her soul and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

Heavenly Father we are stunned and shocked at the death of _____ and as a community we have gathered together to share our sorrow, our bewilderment and our pain. We are all asking the question 'Why?' but there seems to be no easy answer.

We pray especially today for her/his friends, her/his classmates, her/his teachers and all who knew her/him.

We remember _____ for (List some characteristics or traits of the deceased)
We just don't understand this Lord, but help us to let go of any anger or any desire for revenge.
May our tears be replaced by smiles when we think of Name, giving thanks for her/his life and all that she/he was to us and our school.

Help us now pick up the pieces once again and to carry on in life as we believe Name would wish us to.

Almighty God, you know that it will be very difficult for us at our school without _____.
Bring us the strength and the hope we need to carry on as _____ would have wished us to do.
We thank you Lord for the special gifts _____ brought to the school and shared with us.
May the Church and the wider community give thanks for the contribution _____ made to the life of (name of area) and may we redouble our efforts to serve each other, in honour of her/his memory.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

We hold before God all those who are sad because someone they loved has died
We hold before God all those who are sad because someone they knew has died
We hold before God each one of us that we may support each other in the days to come.
We hold before God Name who has died. May s/he rest in peace. Amen.

Lord, we look up to you and receive from you
Your blessing
Your strength
Your most holy love.
In the darkest moments of our lives,
Let us remember that you are the light
You are the hope
You are the courage we need. Amen

Lord God, help us find comfort in our sadness,
Certainty in our doubt
And the courage to live.
Make our faith strong

Through Christ our Lord,
Amen.

Circle us Lord
Keep hope within;
Keep fear without.

Circle us Lord,
Keep peace within,
Keep darkness out.

Circle us Lord,
Keep calm within
Keep turmoil out.

Circle us Lord,
Keep love within
Keep anger away.

Useful Scriptures

1. Job 5:11

The lowly he sets on high, and those who mourn are lifted to safety.

2. Psalm 27:13-14

I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.

3. Isaiah 41:10

Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.

4. John 16:33

I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

5. Romans 8:28

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to His purpose.

6. Romans 8:37-38

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

7. Romans 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

8. 2 Corinthians 1:3

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

9. Philippians 4:6

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank Him for all He has done.

10. Hebrews 13:5

I will never leave you or forsake you.

Appendix 3 – Contacts and Resources

Bereavement Support and Resources

Everyone has a different experience of bereavement and loss. There are no rules about what we should feel, and for how long. There is information on grief and feelings, as well as stories from other young people who have been bereaved.

The suggestions below are suitable for young people who may find accessing online support easier than talking about their loss. Here are some of the best websites recommended by school

For young people and their families

Grief Encounter

www.griefencounter.org.uk - a child bereavement charity. We support children & their families to help alleviate the pain caused by the death of someone close.

Catholic Children's Society

<http://www.cathchild.org.uk> – provides family counselling and first response counselling

CRUSE

www.hopeagain.org.uk – a safe and moderated website run by CRUSE Bereavement Care

Winston's Wish

www.winstonswish.org.uk – a useful website offering practical ideas for helping those bereaved in the family and school community

Child Bereavement

www.childbereavement.org.uk – a bereavement support service for those who have suffered a loss

Counselling Services aimed at Young People

Kooth

<https://xenzone.com/kooth/> - Kooth is a transformational digital mental health support service. It gives children and young people easy access to an online community of peers and a team of experienced counsellors. Access is free of the typical barriers to support: no waiting lists, no thresholds, no cost and complete anonymity. Launched in 2004 and accredited by the BACP, more than 1,500 children and young people across the country login to Kooth every day.

The Mix

<https://www.themix.org.uk/> - The Mix is the UK's leading support service for young people. We are here to help you take on any challenge you're facing - from mental health to money, from homelessness to finding a job, from break-ups to drugs. Talk to us via online, social or our free, confidential helpline.

Support at school

Please remember, we are still here for you as well. If you would like a specific member of staff to contact you, for example a mentor or member of the Inclusion team, you can request a call back by emailing the school office: office@stpauls.greenwich.sch.uk

For more practical advice

What to do when someone dies

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/about-grief/what-to-do-after-someone-dies>

www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/money-legal/legal-issues/what-to-do-when-someone-dies

Useful Contacts for Schools

Guidance and Information:

CBUK have produced a range of resources to assist schools when having conversations with parents, children and young people around bereavement. Additionally, they have created a useful document to support schools when explaining loss and bereavement in relation to the coronavirus pandemic:

Coronavirus: Supporting schools -

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/coronavirus-supporting-pupils>

Schools guide to Managing Bereavement:

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=4b13d694-2038-4918-90b3-13c06100aafb>

- CBUK Educational Resources:

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/education-sector>

- Helping a Young Person with bereavement:

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/Pages/Site/young-people/Category/helping-a-young-person>