



HAMPSTEAD SCHOOL

Learning together Achieving together

Hampstead School's approach to Bereavement

Hampstead School is an inclusive wellbeing award winning school that strives to ensure that all children feel safe when with us. Our values focus on openness, robust-relationships, honesty and trust alongside working with the strengths of each individual child to ensure that they develop the resilience that will enable them to cope well with the hurdles of life.

Introduction

Around 41,000 children are bereaved of a parent every year in the UK. That's nearly two children under 16 every hour. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, sibling, friend or other significant person¹.

Experiencing a bereavement can make children more vulnerable. Bereavement, whether it is an expected death because of illness or a sudden and unexpected death or suicide, is something that can impact on members of our school community at any time.

Safeguarding, confidentiality and recording

We follow our school's safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure that the welfare of the child remains paramount throughout, and that all children are protected from harm.

It is important to maintain confidentiality throughout the handling of any incident or disclosure. However, pupils will need to be made aware that complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

We will discuss with the bereaved child and their family which adults in the school community they would like made aware of the experiences impacting on the child.

The role of the head teacher and senior leadership team is to:

- lead a whole-school approach to the effective management of loss and bereavement including ensuring appropriate training and support provided for staff
- contact the local authority in the case of a sudden and unexpected death or suicide – key professionals would be expected to be involved – e.g. link Educational Psychologist and Mental Health Worker, alongside relevant colleagues and managers
- be the first point of contact for family/child/staff directly affected by a bereavement to extend our condolences and offer support

¹ Winston's Wish <https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/facts-and-figures/>

- record bereavements affecting children
- deal with media enquiries

The role of all staff in our school is to:

- know how to access support for themselves, for other staff and for the family, if advice or information is needed
- know how to report a concern if the bereavement or sudden and unexpected death has placed a child at significant risk of harm
- know how to support a child when they are distressed and how to refer to specialist support if needed
- have a basic understanding of a child's needs when facing loss and change
- teach about loss and bereavement as part of the planned curriculum or in the role of tutor (teachers only)
- inform the head teacher at the earliest possibility if they hear about a death of someone in the school community

Procedures - Following a bereavement

- contact the deceased's family with the aim to establish the facts and avoid rumours (head teacher)
- consider any religious beliefs that may affect the timing of the funeral or impact on other aspects of the bereavement process
- find out, if possible, how the family would like the information to be managed by the school
- allocate member(s) of staff to be the key point(s) of support for the affected child / young person or children / young people and ensure there is support in place for the staff members if required
- inform staff of the death before pupils are informed, recognising that some pupils may have found out through other means. Where possible, staff will be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways to make sure all staff have the same version of the event. Where this has not been possible, staff will be supported to share the information.
- inform pupils who are most directly affected (such as a friendship group), preferably in small groups, by someone known to them and in keeping with the wishes of the family and expertise of the school
- inform the wider school community in line with the wishes of the family. We would normally do this through assemblies and / or letters to parents.

Longer term we will:

- be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life. So, we will record information and share with relevant people, particularly at transition points. This could include ensuring significant dates and events for the child are recorded and shared with appropriate staff for future reference.
- signpost families to bereavement support including that provided by Winston's Wish <https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/> and the school's wellbeing page.
- ensure that learning about loss and bereavement is embedded into appropriate curriculum areas including PSHE education. When teaching about loss and bereavement we will give careful thought as to how to support those directly affected by loss and bereavement.

When discussing any suicide that has occurred, we will ensure that the information given is age appropriate and:

- is factually correct but does not include detail of the suicidal act itself does not romanticise, glorify or vilify the death
- does not include details of any suicide note
- does not include speculation over the motive for suicide
- takes care with the language used – for example using phrases such as 'died by suicide' or 'ended his / her life' rather than 'committed suicide' or 'successful suicide', and saying 'attempted to end his / her life' rather than 'unsuccessful suicide' or 'failed attempt at suicide'.

Equality and inclusion, values and beliefs

We recognise that there is a range of cultural and religious beliefs, customs and procedures concerning death. It follows that bereaved children and families may have differing expectations.

Support for bereaved staff

We are aware that staff also experience bereavement. When this happens, we will ensure they are provided with support to take care of themselves, and to know where they can go for additional help should they need it.

This could include: their GP; Cruse Bereavement Care <http://www.cruse.org.uk/>; or staff counselling, information and advice, the Employee Assistance programme (tel:0800 243 458) the document is on the wellbeing page on RM Unify.

We will work within our leave of absence policy and if necessary, with the council or trust's occupational health team to ensure staff are provided with appropriate leave and support at a time of bereavement.

National support services and support resources

As part of PSHCRE and our safeguarding work we will also signpost to appropriate sources of support for pupils and adults in the school community.

Winston's Wish: www.winstonswish.org Support information and guidance for bereaved children, young people and for those caring for bereaved families.

Cruse Bereavement Care: www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk Support for anyone who has been bereaved.

Childhood Bereavement Network: <http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk> Find childhood bereavement support in your local area.

Hope Again: <http://hopeagain.org.uk/> A website for young people who have been bereaved.

Papyrus: <https://papyrus-uk.org/> Support and advice for young people struggling with thoughts of suicide, and anyone worried about a young person.

Samaritans: <http://www.samaritans.org/your-community/supporting-schools> A range of guidance and support for schools.



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