

St Patrick's Academy, Dungannon



DRAFT BEREAVEMENT POLICY (Draft)

'Achieving Excellence Together'

June 2020

Introduction

St Patrick's Academy is committed to providing a caring and supportive environment during and after the bereavement of a member of our school community. We are committed to supporting any pupil or staff member who experiences bereavement while they are in our school and acknowledge that we may have to employ different strategies and procedures, depending on an individual's circumstances.

We understand that bereavement can impact on members of our school community in different ways and we acknowledge that the loss of a pupil or staff member can be particularly difficult. We recognise that, while every situation is unique, the well-being of our pupils and staff is of paramount importance and will require careful handling. Our aim would be to keep the school open, if possible, or to retain as much normality/structure for pupils and staff as soon as possible. This decision will be taken in consultation with the school's Pastoral Team and relevant external agencies.

Aims

In St Patrick's Academy we will:

- Ensure that pupils and staff are supported during and after bereavement;
- Respond to the bereavement in an informed, sensitive and consistent manner;
- Establish effective and supportive communication links between the school, family and relevant external agencies;
- Use the school's pastoral system to identify key staff who are best placed to support those suffering from bereavement;
- Aim to have a fair, coordinated and consistent approach to managing the bereavement process.

Responding to news of a bereavement

- Members of staff should contact the Principal or a Vice-Principal immediately;
- The Principal and/or Vice-Principal will seek to gather facts;
- If possible, the Principal will speak directly to staff to ensure consistency of message;
- The Principal will decide on how best to break the news to pupils and parents, if appropriate;
- The Principal will deal with all queries from the media;
- The school's Pastoral Team and other key members of staff will support any pupils affected by the bereavement;
- If a family member dies whilst a pupil is in school, the school will encourage a relative to break the news to the pupil but the school can support that person, if necessary;
- The school will work with external agencies including EWO/Social Services, if applicable;
- The school's Critical Incident Policy will be used for dealing with a sudden death on the premises.

Managing the bereavement

- The school will respect the wishes of the family when dealing with a bereavement;
- The Principal will provide information on arrangements for the wake, if appropriate;
- The school's Pastoral Team and school counsellor will continue to provide emotional support for pupils affected by the bereavement and to other vulnerable pupils. Support may include, for example, a special assembly/prayer service;
- The school will acknowledge the death of a pupil or staff member by placing a notice in a newspaper, where appropriate.

Attendance at funerals

- The school will endeavour to be represented at all funerals of a pupil, parent or member of staff;
- The normal representation at a funeral will include a senior member of staff, the pupil's form tutor and four students either from the prefect team or from the student's form class;
- The Principal and relevant Vice-Principal will work with the Pastoral Team, Mrs McIlvanna, Mrs Cullen and Mr Slater to coordinate the school's representation;

- In the event of a bereavement when the school is closed, every effort will be made to adhere to the above;
- These arrangements will be overseen by the Principal who may decide to exercise further discretion;
- The Principal will consider exceptional arrangements in, for example, the death of someone connected to a Looked-After Child or to a child with estranged parents;
- If attendance is not possible at a funeral, the Principal will send a letter of condolence and/or mass card to the family;
- The form tutor will usually be required to play a role in the school's response to a bereavement by assisting with the selection, transportation and organisation of pupils;
- Attendance at the funeral of a relative or close family friend is dealt with in a member of staff's contract of employment. The member of staff should consult with the Principal on this.

Managing the return to school

- The school's Pastoral Team will continue to support the pupil on their return to school;
- The school will put in place exceptional arrangements such as phased return or 'quiet time' for pupils affected by bereavement. A key member of staff will be appointed to monitor the pupil;
- The school will employ 'watchful waiting' in the hope that the pupil or staff member can 'normalise' as soon as possible;
- The school may offer additional support such as access to school counselling services for pupils/staff who find it difficult to 'normalise' by themselves;

Memorials and commemorations

The school will:

- Take into account the wishes of the bereaved family, the nature/location of the critical incident and vulnerable members of the school community before holding commemorations or memorials;
- Remove photos, Books of Condolences and any other mementos as soon as is appropriate after the funeral, normally within a week. These will be placed somewhere private or given to the family;
- Any commemorative prizes will be considered after an appropriate period of time and when the bereavement process has been completed. The school will be guided by its 'Policy on Memorials';
- Try to ensure that all forms of commemorations organised by the school are appropriate, agreed, respectful and in accordance with good practice on trauma and bereavement. Actions will be designed to assist with the progression of the healing and grieving process and to avoid retriggering trauma.

Review

The school will carry out a review of the Bereavement Policy every year or within six weeks of a critical incident.

Linked Documents

Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy

Critical Incident Policy

Policy on Memorials