

MARLBOROUGH ROAD ACADEMY

BEREAVEMENT STRATEGY

This document lays out the strategy adopted by Marlborough Road Academy in the event of a death in the school community. It is based upon the guidance provided by the childhood bereavement charity 'Winston's Wish'.

Informing Children About A Death Within the School Community

The following guidelines concern informing children of the death of a pupil, teacher or other member of staff:

- The Principal will make contact with the family to acknowledge what has happened, express support and to discuss how to share the news with the rest of the community. One (or two) contacts will be agreed with the family.
- The Principal will share the information with rest of staff and, where possible, following the family's choice on how this news is shared more widely with a) the child's peers and b) the rest of the school. (There are a few exceptions, for example, when the death is known about and already widely discussed within the school community).
- Staff will identify those children who had a long-term and/or close relationship with the deceased to be told together as a separate group. All pupils would be informed.
- Staff will take account of pupils with specific needs including: pupils with past history of loss; pupils with a learning disability and pupils who have difficulty managing their emotions or behaviour. For these pupils, the message would be delivered by the staff with the strongest relationship with the pupils e.g. Key Workers, SENCO. Experience has shown that it is more beneficial if all pupils are informed.
- It is always a shock when a death occurs in a school even if it may have been anticipated. In the eyes of the pupils, teachers are part of the fittings and fixtures in school and are not expected to die. Children expect to live forever, and so a fellow pupil dying whilst still young enough to attend school can also feel quite shocking. Staff will have been provided with guidelines on how to inform children.
- Children and young people will be given time to verbalise their feelings and fears. Space will be allowed for "If only's..." to be acknowledged.
- Pupils will be provided with times to share their own experiences of death, e.g. "When my pet/my gran died" etc. This may take place during class family meeting time or at specially designated times.
- Pupil's questions will be answered factually. Staff will avoid using euphemisms like 'passed away', or 'lost' etc. Instead, the words dead, died and death will be used to avoid confusion for children.
- Staff will be prepared by Senior Leaders for children to say or do the unexpected, experience has shown some responses or apparent lack of response may be upsetting for adults. No apparent response does not mean that a child does not care.
- The school will collectively acknowledge the loss and remember the person, for instance with an assembly, memory book, and maybe in time a permanent memorial (garden, tree, bench, award...). This would be in an appropriate form for the children's age.

- It is natural that children may be upset and/or need time to process information. The Quiet Rooms will provide a quiet space for them to go to and support will be available for them both immediately afterwards and in the days that follow. This support would be provided by members of school staff e.g. Key Workers, Class Teacher, SENCO, DSL and by external organisations e.g. Educational Psychologists

Informing Staff and Governors Of A Death Within The School Community

A death can affect the school community in different ways and depends on:

- The role that the deceased person had in school.
- How well known they were in the local community.
- Circumstances surrounding the death, particularly suicide, or other violent or sudden deaths.

At Marlborough Road Academy we believe that adults and children benefit from being kept informed of a death. Rumour and gossip can be very damaging and can lead to both young and old developing the attitude that the death is not a topic to talk about. Children and young people have a healthy curiosity and if they are not informed of the circumstances, or feel they are unable to ask questions, their normal grief process can be affected.

At Marlborough Road Academy, the following guidelines are adhered to, when informing staff and governors of a death:

- A staff meeting will be arranged as soon as practicable and absent staff will be identified. This meeting will be led by the Principal or member of the Senior Leadership Team.

The Principal will inform the Governors.

- If a death has occurred in a holiday period, all staff are informed, using the emergency plan protocols.
- Staff will be given a factual explanation of how the death occurred.
- School leaders will be prepared for obvious upset and feelings of anger/guilt and aware that people may connect the incident to their own personal experience of bereavement, so feelings about past bereavements may need to be discussed. This is perfectly natural. Supervision arrangements are in place both in house and via the Educational Psychology service to support the wellbeing of staff. The school SENCO is also trained as the mental health champion for the establishment.
- To enable absent staff to feel part of a caring team, arrangements will be made for the Principal or member of the Senior Leadership Team to inform them over the telephone, if a personal visit is impractical. At all times, the relationship between the absent colleague and deceased will be taken into account.
- For a death that may attract media coverage (e.g. if the member of staff was a well-known personality or died tragically), the Principal will liaise with the press officer for United Learning Trust, who will manage any media intrusion. Liaison with the individual's family is essential, prior to reporting information to the media, in order to respect their privacy and wishes.
- The Principal will establish good lines of communication with all relevant parties, this will always include family and staff, in other cases it may involve communication with emergency services, health, the Educational Psychology service, Social Care, and other support services.

- All staff have access to CIC support services, who are independent of the organisation and available to talk things through with a member of staff, if they are finding the situation particularly hard.
- The Principal will prepare a letter to parents and carers
- The Principal will provide staff with a script about what has happened so that consistent information is given to all of the pupils, including, where possible, some answers to difficult questions that staff may be asked by the children, to prevent them needing to think of appropriate responses on the spot.
- The Senior Leadership Team will encourage everyone to consider how to meet their own support needs and take care of themselves, this may be from friends, family, support services and/or buddying up with other members of staff. The SENCO will advise staff of further support services available and provide contact details for support in the local area.
- Trained and experienced practitioners are available on the Winston's Wish Freephone National Helpline (08088 020 021) and they are available for consultation.

Informing Parents in The School Community About the Death of A Member Of Staff, Governor Or Pupil.

The information will be shared with the school community, as agreed with the family. A simple form of words that parents can also share with their children will be used. This will be in the form of a letter from the Principal. The Principal will liaise with the United Learning press officer.

The letter to parents will signpost families towards support from local services and online, both for adults and for adults to support children.

Parents will be updated by the Principal about ways in which they can share their condolences and engage in any memorial activities/events, in accordance with the wishes of the family.

COVID 19

During the current pandemic, every effort will be made to ensure that the steps outlined above are followed and the actions outlines taken. Adjustments may need to be made to allow virtual rather than face to face contact