There has not been a change to the policy and this policy was reviewed in March 2017.

Approved by Pupil Welfare Committee: 22 March 2017
Signed by Chair of Committee: G Rowland
Ratified by the Full Board of Governors on: 21 June 2017
Signed Chair of Governors: C Turner
Review Date: Within 4 years from above date
Bereavement Policy

Philosophy

The Highcrest Academy is a caring community and one that strives to support its students and staff within a safe and secure environment in order to become valued members of society in all aspects of their lives.

We believe that all members of staff are constantly and actively involved in the support of each pupil’s learning and progress.

Bereavement is one such aspect, but one that brings with it acute pain and a turmoil of emotions, not least in adolescence. The death of a member of staff, pupil, parent or relation will inevitably and sadly take place at some time during a student’s school career.

The relationship between the student or member of staff, to the person who died will have a huge impact upon his/her response. This might range from an overwhelming feeling of loss and anger when someone significant dies to a brief feeling of sadness where there was minimal knowledge of the dead person. The death of someone from a terminal illness may have given someone the opportunity of time in preparation, but a sudden death will have more of a devastating impact on relatives and friends.

Whatever the context, the school must respond to the needs of all those involved with compassion and sensitivity.

This policy aims to ensure that those needs are met.

Aims of the policy

When students and staff are faced with bereavement they will be provided with appropriate support. This will take the form of providing opportunities to express feeling in a safe and secure environment, to develop an action plan and to provide specialist support if needed. These various agencies should aid the student or member of staff in adjusting to the different stages of grief.

There are four tasks of grief as identified by Worden (1991):

- To accept the reality of loss
- To work through the pain of grief
- To adjust to an environment in which the dead person is missing
- To relocate emotionally the deceased person and move on in life

To achieve success in addressing these four tasks it is imperative to work closely with parents, the wider family and other carers and professionals.
**Proactive Support**

The society we live in tends to view death and dying as a private affair. As we encounter the varying responses from different religions and cultures we will need to recognise the multi-ethnic and faith society in which we live. In doing so, we need to provide the opportunity to grieve according to their cultural and religious beliefs. Therefore, we need to educate about death and the associated traditions and rituals of mourning. This should occur within both a formal and an informal setting.

The education of death will take place in Religious Education and PSHE lessons during school. The course will cover elements of death and dying, the impact on relationships and strategies for coping.

Aspects of death and bereavement education will be raised in many subject areas including English, Drama, and History.

Discussions may sometimes take place during tutor time, school trips, school assemblies, one to one discussions with Learning Mentors, pastoral staff, counsellors and bereavement agencies. Where this happens it is important to allow the student to express and share their feelings, to answer questions sensitively and honestly and to refer on where appropriate.

**The Inclusion Team**

The death of a student, parent/carer or member of staff will inevitably bring disruption to the life of a number of people. Disruption needs to be managed as best as possible and a designated member of staff will need to ensure that appropriate responses and support are made available.

This person is likely to be the Principal, a member of the Senior Leadership Team, or a member of the Inclusion team.

Where a grandparent dies it is likely to be the form tutor who monitors the student. In all cases it should be established who the main key workers should be. A meeting of key workers should ensure that procedures are correctly followed.

Key Staff will include:

- The Principal or Senior Leadership Team
- The Head of Learning
- Form Tutor
- Learning Mentors
- Connexions
- Counsellors
- Any member of staff who has specific knowledge of the child/family
Other Key staff are:

- The Chair of Governors
- Connexions counsellors
- Educational Psychologist
- The School Nurse/Matron
- Education Welfare
- Outside Bereavement Counsellors, Cruse, Child Bereavement Trust.

Procedures

The procedures will remain the same for most situations, however the order that they are undertaken may vary:

- Establish who is coordinating the support/inclusion team
- Arrange a meeting with the support/inclusion team
- Discuss details of the death, what happened, time etc
- Appoint a person to liaise with family
- Discuss media attention
- Decide which members of staff need to be told
- Decide which students need to be told
- Discuss how to tell the rest of staff/students
- Discuss how and when staff/students will be told
- Arrange a special assembly
- Always give students honest and precise information
- Inform the Chair of Governors
- Decide whether parents need to be informed by letter in the event of a crisis
- Decide which external agencies are to be called upon and who will contact them
- Set at time for a review meeting

The above will need to be addressed within hours of the news breaking and it may be necessary to think of practical issues.

- A room will need to be established for staff and students to go to for support
- Students should not be left unattended whilst grieving
- A prayer room set up if appropriate
- A supply of writing materials, tissues
- A condolence/memory book for people to express their memories
- Free up staff where appropriate to support students or members of staff

It is extremely important to allow students and staff to express their thoughts and feelings and to acknowledge that these feelings will manifest themselves in many different ways.

Often death will trigger painful memories and feelings of loss, so it is important to make sure that every student/staff member should feel supported.
When funeral arrangements have been made it is important to remember to be sensitive to the wishes of parents/students and staff and priority must be given to the people most close to the deceased.

It is important to keep all parents informed of any arrangements being made by the school and who is responsible for supporting students whilst in school. It is quite likely that students or staff may want to attend any funeral arrangements and in some cases it may be necessary to close the school.

After the funeral it is important that support is maintained for staff and students.

- Ensure professional support remains available to staff and students
- Establish a personal key member of staff for the student
- Ensure additional support/time for any school/course work missed
- Ensure appropriate information on school files are updated
- Continue to provide normal routines and rituals in school
- Be aware of anniversaries and birthdays
- Respect the wishes of parents, students and staff
- Respond to ideas for memorials, fund raising and collections

**Putting the Policy into Practice**

The above written policy and procedures are purely guidelines designed to support students and staff members in responding to bereavement. Whilst the protocol is of some importance the greatest significance is the sensitivity we convey to the situation.

The sensitivity we convey will be through:

- The school’s caring ethos of the most distressing of situations
- The readiness to acknowledge openly death and to be able to recognise the need to grieve
- A willingness to respond by listening and answering questions sought by young people
- Finding a balance between normal school routines and creating space for staff and students in such exceptional circumstances

The above mark the extension of our pastoral care, a readiness to prioritise in times of exceptional circumstances, to ensure that staff are properly informed. To ensure that where appropriate staff have experience and training to deal with these situations and to ensure that support is in place.

An annual review of the policy needs to take place and a broad consultation to ensure that we learn from each bereavement in order to improve better support in the future.
References

Counselling and Supporting Children in Distress by Simon Sharp and Helen Cowie 1988 (Sage)
Children and Bereavement, Death and Loss: What can schools do? by Patsy Wagner 1993 (NAPCE)
A Child’s Grief by Julie Stokes and Dianna Crossley 1995 (Channel 4)
Death and Bereavement in Schools by Angela Jones and Margaret Wysling 1999 (Principal)
Supporting Bereaved Children: A Handbook by Diane MacBraidy 2003 (Interfaith Education Centre)

Resources for Staff

Death and Bereavement by Margaret Rogers, Valerie Mandelson and Lisa 1995 (Chalkface Project)
What If? Young People and Bereavement 1998 (Cranleigh Communications)
Studies in Mortality by Anita Chadhuri 2.02.2000 (The Times)
A Time to Grieve: the Death of a Teacher by John Holland (Cardiff Academic Press)
Bereavement: A Whole School Issue 3.09.2002 (TES)

Sources of Help

Cruse Bereavement Care
(a national charity set up to offer free, confidential help to bereaved people)
Address: Oakley Hall, Castle Street High Wycombe, Bucks
Tel: 01494 – 511117
Website: www.crusebereavement.org.uk
E-mail: support@crusebucks.org.uk

Care of the Free Church
Address: Woodside Road, Amersham, Buckinghamshire, HP6 6AJ
Tel: 01494- 722515

Child Bereavement Charity
Address: The Saunderton Estate, Wycombe Road, Saunderton, Bucks HP14 4HU
Tel: 01494 – 568900
E-mail: enquiries@childbereavement.org.uk
Web: www.childbereavement.org.uk

Winston’s Wish
Tel: 08452 030405
Website: www.winstonswish.org.uk
Offers a well produced range of resources and publications including activity sheets, books and leaflets. Family support line Tel: 0845 20 30 40 5. The website has a section for young people where they can e-mail their questions to a bereavement counsellor and share experiences with other bereaved children.

**Childhood Bereavement Network**
Tel: 020 7843 6309  
Website: www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk

Website has a link to a directory of childhood bereavement organisations in England which provide ‘open access’ support services such as bereavement groups. Facility for county by county search for any local help.