



Major Incident Plan

All Governing Bodies should have approved their school's Major Incident Plan so that nobody has to think on the hoof whilst distressed or shocked. This plan can then be executed *in extremis* without further consultation. The Major Incident Plan and all associated strategies should be drawn up in consultation with the local authority's psychological services and/or the Diocesan Board of Education so that there is no conflict of action in the event of a bereavement.

Guidelines for Breaking News About a Death to Staff or Governors

- Disseminate news quickly to Chair of Governors, and to both local authority and Diocesan Director of Education; it is important to have a simple statement and stick to it.
- Instructions must be given about how to deal with the press and internet.
- Arrange a staff meeting, which should take place as soon as possible.
- Impart agreed factual information. Never make assumptions or repeat what has been said by rumour.
- Give news sensitively and empathetically, being aware that people might react in different ways. Be aware of the relationships staff might have had with the person who has died.
- Ensure that there is someone responsible for telling people who are unable to attend the staff meeting, such as part time staff, peripatetic staff, lunch time supervisors. Consider the best way of imparting the information to those absent, perhaps through a home visit, or by telephone, text or email.
- Identify individual members of staff who feel able to:
 - a. support other members of staff;
 - b. support groups of children. The most appropriate person to support the children should be well-known to them and trusted.
- Identify a member of staff who will liaise with the individual's family, to deal with staff condolences and any involvement in funeral arrangements (if necessary).
- Identify an appropriate member of staff who will take telephone calls and/or direct them as appropriate. Try to establish a dedicated telephone line to ensure free flow of accurate information. Telephone line providers might provide an additional line if the situation requires one.
- Identify a member of staff who will provide a newsletter, which should be sent the same day, for parents.
- Arrange a staff meeting at the end of the day to ensure staff are coping with the situation.
- Identify any unresolved problems or ongoing issues.
- Ensure that those staff who live alone have contact numbers of friends in case of need.
- Identify sources of advice and support for help in coming to terms with the bereavement; local clergy will be able to offer some help with these questions. The help offered will take it as given that diocesan officers and local authority representatives are already involved.

Guidelines for Breaking News of the Death to the Pupils

- Inform the children as soon as possible about the death.

- Where possible, the pupils should first be informed in small groups such as class or tutor groups.
- Identify those children who had a long term and/or close relationship with the person who has died so they can be told separately.
- If appropriate, a special gathering in assembly could be held at a later time in the day to remember the person who has died.
- Allow the children to ask questions and answer them honestly and factually in terms that they will understand.
- Allow the children to verbalise their feelings, to discuss the situation and share their experiences of death.
- Be honest about your own feelings and talk about your relationship with the person.
- Avoid using euphemisms.
- Those children who have had more involvement with the person should be given the opportunity to share their feelings and experiences, either within the group or on a one-to-one basis.
- Ensure the children understand that the death is nothing to do with anything they have said or done. It is no way their fault.
- Reassure them that not all people who are ill or have had an accident will die as a result, and that many people get better.
- Put an appropriate time limit on the discussion. It is preferable to resume normal school activities as soon as possible, thus ensuring minimal disruption within the school.
- Conclude the discussion with a prayer to remember the person who has died and his or her family.
- Be available for any child who needs additional help and support.

Things to Consider in the Days Following the News of the Death

- Ensure nominated staff with responsibilities for supporting staff and children are available to do so. It might be necessary temporarily to provide staff cover for their normal activities.
- Identify an allocated quiet place where children and staff can go if necessary.
- Try to engender an awareness of when people need help and support, particularly those who worked closely with the person who has died and secretaries/administrative staff who are taking telephone calls, dealing with parents etc.
- Through the nominated staff member who has responsibility for liaising with the individual's family, ascertain their wishes about the school's involvement, if any, in the funeral.
- Consider practical issues such as:
 - Sending flowers to the home or to the funeral, making a collection.
 - Who will attend the funeral.
 - Cover for any staff who might be going to the funeral.
 - Transport to and from the funeral.
 - Informing the parents of those pupils who will be involved.
 - Possible closure of the school. If this is the case, remember to tell lunchtime supervisors and caretakers in advance.

Support for Pupils

- It is important to identify pupils who might be particularly vulnerable or likely to experience PSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), for example, anyone who witnessed the death. Compile (and keep updated) a list of local church leaders, youth workers, diocesan officer,

local authority representatives and outside professionals who can come into the school to counsel pupils in the event of a traumatic death.

- Make sure that help offered from outside is appropriate before accepting. Pupils might find it difficult to be receptive to support or counselling from families of fellow pupils.
- Identify a suitable place in school for pupils who need some space if too upset to stay in the classroom and people to whom they can go for support.
- Remembering. This is difficult to plan in advance, but careful thought is required. The dead person's family needs to be consulted. Schools often find that an assembly that takes the form of a celebration of life is appropriate, though this should begin by recognizing the inevitable sadness and deep sense of loss before moving to thanksgiving and celebration of life.

Support for Staff

- Supporting bereaved pupils will be very stressful for staff, who might well be already struggling with their own reactions and emotions. Include a list of outside agencies, including people at your local churches, who might be able to offer help, both short and long term.
- Plan for some sort of informal mutual support, at the end of the school day, for example, in the staffroom, to give staff an opportunity to share feelings and reactions.

The First Few Days

- What will happen in the first few days after an incident? It is usually best to have minimum disruption to the timetable, but some flexibility might be required.
- Consider what the school approach will be if pupils are too upset to attend lessons. If it is a teacher who has died, what will happen to their class?

The Funeral

- It is essential to sound out the family's wishes. The family might well welcome involvement of members of the school community but, equally, might wish to keep it private.
- Identify which staff and pupils might want to attend, and the practicalities of issues such as staff cover and transport. For some schools, it is appropriate to close; for others, it is not. Clear guidance on this will be helpful.
- Will flowers be sent and/or a collection made? Involve staff and pupils in the decision.

Policy adopted by school on : March 2016

Signed: _____

Chair of Governors