



# ALSOP HIGH SCHOOL

## Bereavement Guidelines

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## **Alsop High School** **Bereavement Guidance 2022/3**

**We have amended our bereavement guidelines to acknowledge the impact the death of wider family/friends has on our young people as a result of student voice.**

### **Rationale**

Alsop High School believes in adopting a holistic approach to the care and support of our students. Death and bereavement are an inevitable part of life, a parent of children under 18 dies every 22 minutes in the UK- around 23,600 a year; 1 in 29 school children has been bereaved of a parent or sibling- that's a child in every class; each year around 6000 families are bereaved by suicide (A whole school approach to supporting loss, separation and bereavement 2017). **78% 11-16 year olds in one survey said that they had been bereaved of a close relative or friend (Harrison and Harrington, 2001). We estimate that around 26,900 parents die each year in the UK, leaving dependent children. That's one parent every 20 minutes. These estimates are averages for the last three years (2019-2021) (Childhood Bereavement Network)**

We aim to provide:

- an environment that is sensitive and compassionate to those bereaved, whatever their cultural or religious beliefs.
- opportunities for students and families to develop skills to cope with death and grief.
- educational opportunities to discuss death and the associated rituals and traditions of mourning.
- access to appropriate information and support when needed.

We at Alsop recognise that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to supporting a grieving student and their families and so we place their needs and wishes at the heart of all conversations and actions. Alongside this, we appreciate the importance of all students and their families receiving equal experiences and access to bereavement support regardless of the year group they are in.

### **Key staff**

Headteacher- Paul Masher- responsible for co-ordinating response, setting the appropriate atmosphere and dealing with any media involvement where necessary. The Headteacher is usually the first point of contact. If information comes into school via the office, Paul Masher and Kathy Begley- Bereavement Lead- should be notified.

Bereavement Lead- Kathy Begley- responsible for informing the Head of Year and Form Tutor, liaising with the family and all parties concerned or affected in the initial stages. The Bereavement Lead will arrange a meeting with the family and student to create an action plan for their return to school- the Pastoral Team or Form Tutor will also be involved.

Pastoral Team and Form Tutor- will keep in touch with the family once initial contact has been made and will be involved in supporting the student whilst they are absent from school, during their re-integration meeting and on their return to school. Key contact person will be dependent upon who has the most positive relationship with the student and family.

Pastoral Support Mentors inc Mental Health mentor- will liaise with the Bereavement Lead to provide support for the student and their family, gaining access to specialist support where necessary.

### **Immediate Procedure**

The school will respond in a planned manner, so that all staff are aware of their responsibilities and can contribute in a way that is thoughtful and consistent with the ethos of Alsop High School.

Contact with the family will be made by the Headteacher, Safeguarding or Bereavement Lead to express sympathy, confirm details of what has happened and to agree on what information can be shared.

The Bereavement Lead will refer to the 'Whole School Approach to Supporting Loss Separation and Bereavement Policy' (School Improvement Liverpool, 2019).

The Headteacher, Safeguarding or Bereavement Lead will inform staff as appropriate. This will take place within a specifically called year briefing to inform the relevant pastoral team. Depending on the wishes of the family, the Head of Year will inform further staff.

Students will be informed as per the wishes of the family. The Headteacher, Safeguarding or Bereavement Lead, Head of Year and Pastoral Support Mentors will co-ordinate this.

The Local Authority and any other agencies will be informed and involved as appropriate.

The overall responsibility for ensuring staff and student welfare lies with the Headteacher, Safeguarding, Bereavement Lead and Mental Health Mentor. The Headteacher will prepare any press statements in liaison with the family where necessary and may also need to liaise with the police.

The Bereavement Lead and the Head of Year will discuss attendance at the funeral and/or memorial service, agreed with the family.

Any basic information will be recorded by the Bereavement Lead.

### **Initial Support Plan- Responsibility of Bereavement Lead and Head of Year**

Regular contact is kept with the family- the Bereavement Lead, Head of Year or Form Tutor is responsible for this depending on the relationship with the student. Talking with the student and their family will give an insight to how they are coping and what their concerns are.

If a student is absent from school, the Form Tutor should organize a card or messages to be sent via school in order to remind the student they are being thought of. This will also give the other students an opportunity to think about and discuss their own feelings. The Mental Health Mentor will also be available to work with students and staff at this point.

The Bereavement Lead will arrange a meeting with the student and their family before their return to school to discuss their thoughts, feelings, concerns and any support they might want to help them cope once back in school. This might be best as a home visit with a member of the Pastoral Team, Mental Health Mentor or Form Tutor. Refer to 'A Whole School Approach to Supporting Loss, Separation and Bereavement' (School Improvement Liverpool, 2019) for resources to facilitate this meeting.

If the student is finding it difficult to return to school other options must be considered in terms of timetabling and reintegration package.

### **Ongoing Support Plan- Responsibility of Head of Year**

Access to the Mental Health and Wellbeing Mentor, Pastoral Support Mentor and counselling should be offered to the student on their return to school. If they do not wish to speak with anyone, a named staff member (usually the Form Tutor) should regularly check on how the student is coping- this

could include speaking directly with the student, and also their family. There is no set pattern to grief, and it affects people in very different ways. Students may require counselling straight away; others may refuse but come around to the idea months later. Any support offered must not have a time limit and the student should know it is always an option to accept at a later date.

The Form Tutor should liaise with subject staff about any outstanding or missed work and organize ways to support the student in catching up.

All staff should be alert to any changes in behaviour- reactions may present themselves months or even years after the event. The Head of Year should closely monitor attendance as this could be linked to problems at home or school associated with the bereavement. Open communication is the key to supporting students and it is important that any concerns are shared with the Pastoral Team, Mental Health Mentor or Bereavement Lead and families contacted.

Exam Boards will need to be notified of any impact of bereavement if public exams are due- Head of Year will speak to the exams office.

### **Responsibilities**

The management of bereavement is a whole school issue, however there are clear lines of accountability in order to provide our students and families the best support.

### **The Governors/ Trustees**

To ensure the guidance is implemented.

### **Headteacher/ Senior Leadership Team**

To be the first point of contact for the student and their families.

To co-ordinate any media enquiries.

To identify appropriate support within the school community or an external agency.

To offer support to staff and students in the wider school community.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The effectiveness of this guidance will be monitored and reviewed by the Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team, July 2023. This will include the following methods- where appropriate:

Feedback from students and families affected by bereavement.

Feedback from staff involved in a bereavement situation.

Discussion with relevant Local Authority Personnel.