



CAMBRIDGE
SCHOOL OF
VISUAL &
PERFORMING
ARTS

DEATH AND BEREAVEMENT POLICY

Date of Policy	August 2025
Next Review Date	August 2026
Lead for Review	Head Teacher, Rector, Deputy Head - Wellbeing, Head of Welfare

AIM & INTRODUCTION

The aim of this policy is to ensure that timely, sensitive, and effective support is provided in the event of bereavement.

Grief and mourning are expressed very openly in some cultures; death is public, often involving whole communities grieving in public spaces together. In other societies it is still generally a very private affair. We should be aware of the different cultural and religious traditions of grieving and mourning in order to assist students.

We need to foster an environment where they feel they can ask questions and share experiences. The discussion of feelings of loss and separation must be included in PSHE lesson whenever appropriate so that students are comfortable discussing these feelings when they arise.

Definition of terms:

- 'Grief', describes the emotional and psychological response to loss and is experienced by people of all cultures;
- 'Mourning', denotes the act of portraying such grief and can be varied in its expression depending on culture and religion.

Fortunately, the death of a student or member of staff is a rare occurrence, however it is essential that we are fully prepared to provide effective support and communication when tragedy does strike, including:

- Deal with first day issues, including class meetings
- Provide support after the first week and beyond, including memorials
- Give on-going support to students and staff if necessary
- De-brief staff if necessary

The death of someone known to a student is more common. This policy also includes procedures for how to deal with the death of someone known to a student.

INVOLVEMENT OF STUDENTS

The degree to which students (young people/children) are involved in the traditions and rituals related to bereavement varies considerably between cultures. It is clear that students involved in such ceremonies tend to deal with later life events with much less stress. CATS Cambridge and CSVPA will, as is reasonably possible, ensure that students are fully supported and able to participate in the traditions and rituals of their culture as it relates to bereavement, grief and mourning,

BEING PREPARED

No matter how prepared we think we are, death is often traumatic and unexpected. Its unpredictability can severely unbalance a school whose normal working environment is one based on routine. Intervention is essential in managing and minimising any disruption.

DEATH OF RELATIVE OR FRIEND OF STUDENT

If you are contacted by a family member disclosing the death of a family member, or of a close friend of the student, they may ask you to inform the student for them. Experience shows that this information is always best coming from family. Staff **MUST NOT** inform students if asked to do so by family. Where pressure to do so is applied, staff should politely explain that the matter will be referred to the Head Teacher and/or the Head of Welfare.

The information provided during the initial contact should be documented using the Welfare Concern note on Shackleton. Staff should take advice from their school's Head of Welfare before doing anything further, a member of the Welfare Team will decide who should approach student. This maybe you, with support from the Welfare Team, if you are happy to have the conversation.

If the School is asked to help facilitate a phone call so the family can inform the student this should take place in a confidential space (eg an office), not in the student's own room in School.

If a student discloses to you that they have suffered a death in the family or of a close friend, this should be documented using the Welfare Concern note on Shackleton.

Whoever engages with the student initially should:

- Inform the student of the School's support and the availability of compassionate leave,
- Ask the student if they are plan to return home to be with their family.
 - Discuss with them the potential benefits of wider communication of the fact that they are dealing with a bereavement: Note that is to make those who work with the student aware of the fact so that they can modify their behaviour if needed.
 - Be sympathetic to the fact that some students may not want to discuss the matter with wider staff and may fear special treatment, pity, or that they will have to have multiple conversations about what may be a very disturbing time for them. In this instance, explain that a phrase similar to, "Please do not approach the student about this matter, they are aware of support available" is appropriate. might be the best way to mitigate against this happening.
 - Document any specific details about the individual who has died or the circumstances surrounding their death in private notes.

AFTER THE STUDENT HAS BEEN INFORMED:

Give grieving students the opportunity to tell you what happened and how they feel.

Encourage them to work with you to make modifications and accommodations to their schoolwork. This will help them voice what they need and how they are feeling.

Grieving is a process. Make sure you are patient and give them adequate time to resume a normal workflow. Putting too much pressure on them too quickly may result in an emotional breakdown or School avoidance.

Refrain from using terms like "moved on" or "passed away". Be honest and use the words dead/died.

Encourage students to ask questions about death. Often if things are not discussed, students will create their own, inaccurate interpretations of events. For example, if a student's parent commits suicide, the student may falsely decide that they caused it somehow. Helping students understand the event will ensure that their interpretations are accurate, as painful as the truth may be.

Understand that we all grieve differently. There is no right or wrong way to do it. There may be a great deal of anger, the need for vengeance, and an ongoing sense of worry for your student. Always remember that it is hard work for your student to grieve. You are only able to be helpful in supporting them in their process. Avoid remarks like "Time will heal" or "They are now in a better place" or "with god".

Encourage "active coping" techniques, which refer to taking action to seek out help when one is hurting. Be straightforward with the student, explaining that you really want to understand what they need and how they are feeling. Give them time and encouragement since they often may not be able to express themselves or let you know what they need right away.

Connect them with a place to go outside the classroom if they become upset. This may be with the School Nurse, Welfare Team member, PT or whomever the student feels will be most helpful.

Let the student know they are free to leave lessons whenever they feel like they need space.

DEATH OF A STAFF MEMBER OR STUDENT

Assemble the Emergency Team (ET) - See the Emergency Management Policy

The team would include:

- The Head Teacher or Rector, who would be the Key Member. He/she would be responsible for liaising with all parties concerned and would be first point of contact
- A deputy, who would deputise for the Key Member (or appointed member of Senior Leadership Team) as the media spokesperson. The media spokesperson may, if need arises, liaise with media and possibly police. Communicate to staff all media contact through designated spokesperson. Welfare Team to organise support for students The People and Engagement Business Partner, or other senior member of the CGS P&E team to organise support for staff.

First Day

Upon hearing news of a death, the member of staff should contact the Key Member. The Key Member should gather all details surrounding the death. It is vital to have all the facts.

For example:

- How did you find out about the death?
- Is your source accurate?
- How can you check the information is correct?
- When did the death occur?
- Where?
- What were the circumstances?
- Who was with the child/staff member when it happened?
- When is the funeral?

Who should you tell?

Members of staff who are directly involved should be told individually by the key member of staff, or by an individual nominated by the key member of staff.

The rest of the staff should be told altogether. Every attempt should be made to avoid people finding out from each other. Make sure administrative staff and absent staff are also informed.

Head Teacher/Rector, who may like to write a letter of condolence There are different procedures to follow, depending on the person who has died.

DEATH OF STUDENT – WHETHER TERMINALLY ILL OR UNEXPECTED DEATH

The death of a fellow student is probably the most demanding situation a student could be forced to face whilst at School.

In the event of a student becoming terminally ill, their wishes and those of the parents/guardians should always be respected. Should the student wish to attend School, the Welfare team should assess the student's health and wellbeing, and a care plan must be put in place.

Whether the death of a student is at home or School, the Key Member, after consulting with the deceased's family or relatives, should then inform close friends and acquaintances.

Confidentiality is paramount. To avoid rumours, it is important to be open and honest and not make assumptions about cause of death. The cause of the death will not be communicated unless the deceased's next of kin has given consent or there has been an official determination which is in the public domain.

A general staff meeting will be called to allow private grief before announcing news to rest of the School, if at all possible.

It is essential that all staff and students, who are acquainted with deceased, be informed as quickly as possible

An announcement should be made in special assemblies or through individual meetings as deemed appropriate by the key person.

The initial announcement to staff should include:

- Guidance about the engagement about the death during the course of normal school activities.
- An explanation of the need for them to be prepared for feelings of anger, disbelief, and fear. It is better to have the assembly in the morning so that staff, have time to support
- Guidance that a note should be raised on Shackleton for any student who appears very distressed
- That if they feel additional support to manage engage in their day to day work their support requirement should be discussed with their line manager or a member of the SLT in the first instance.
- That it is essential to allow students time to articulate thoughts and feelings and to support them.
- Sharing their grief in a supportive environment can help facilitate the grieving process

The key person should consider enlisting the assistance from a professional bereavement counsellor²

The media spokesperson appointed by the key person, will, after consulting the Emergency Team, decide which information to release. Information that might upset, confuse, or exacerbate situation should be withheld.

DEATH OF A MEMBER OF STAFF

This is an event when the School Community may become involved in the grieving process together.

To avoid rumours, it is advisable that the whole School is informed as soon as possible, however, this whole school communication should take place after a private session with all staff together.

Once the private session for staff has taken place, it is best to then inform the whole School in an assembly and then allow students to discuss and grieve together.

School life should continue as normal, this so that it is kept the safe haven it should be.

MULTIPLE DEATHS OR DEATH IN THE SCHOOLS

The key member of the Emergency Team to gather facts and details quickly and determine likely impact on whole School.

Additional support staff may be needed e.g., other CGS schools, Local Counselling Services.

Due to the sensitive nature of such events, the Emergency Team will plan and treat each incident separately.

DEATH OF A MEMBER OF FAMILY OF STAFF

There are various ways that the member of staff can be supported at this time of loss:

- Send a card or message in early stages
- Show genuine concern and care
- Keep in regular contact by phone or letter
- Ensure person knows about organisations that may help

FOLLOW UP ON WELFARE OF STUDENTS

Consideration will be given to the long-term effects on the School and will be monitored by the Welfare Team.

PACKING UP THE BELONGINGS OF THE DECEASED

The following procedure should be followed:

- Lock the Room and restrict access
- Two personnel go into the room to pack it up. One to pack, one to write a list for the inventory (see template below)
- Once you have listed everything, both sign it. (If more people in the room everyone signs the lists) You may type it up but do not throw out the original handwritten list.

- One list in the boxes, seal the boxes.
- One held with the Deputy Head – Wellbeing / Dean of Student Experience, together with the handwritten lists.
- One for the parents (they may not want it all)
- Then secure all items in restricted storage
- If there is a laptop, that is not password protected or digital camera, they should have a sticky label with two signatures on them then placed over the catches or on button to prevent opening/viewing
- Make sure the list is descriptive, do not leave anything out or sanitize anything, some parents want to see everything

Our policy is not to launder any clothing or bedding but record it on the inventory.

If the student has lent anything out to their friends – someone will need to ask. The same as if they borrowed someone else's clothes, CDs etc.

Package		XX of XX
Quantity	Item	Description
2	T-shirts	1 Black
		1 Blue - unwashed

Restricted contents

The following items are prohibited from being packed and shipped with personal items:

- Unlicensed controlled drugs and associate paraphernalia
- Any quantities of prescription-based medicines that are not accompanied with a current valid prescription and covering the quantity of medicine prescribed.
- Firearms (including gas pistols, gas canisters etc.) ammunition and explosives.
- Flick knives, bayonets, double sided swords, double sided knives, butterfly knives, belt buckle knives, push daggers, hand and foot claws, death stars, blowpipes, blowguns, sword sticks, knuckle dusters, telescopic truncheons, and some types of martial arts equipment
- Indecent and/or obscene material
- Meat, poultry, and most of their products (whether cooked or not), including ham, bacon, sausage, pate, eggs, and milk.
- Plants and plant related produce including trees, shrubs, soil, vegetables, fruit, bulbs, and seeds.
- Most animals, whether alive or dead (for example stuffed animals) and certain articles from protected species including fur skins, ivory, reptile leather, stony corals and goods made from them.

Consideration should be given to a deceased student's privacy when deciding which items to send to parents. This will need to consider the age and culture of the individual student.