

Bereavement

Actions in the event of the death of a parent

Whether the death is a result of a long illness or a sudden event, the effects are felt far and wide; the pupil themselves but also their friends, other parents and the staff who knew the deceased. Often at times like this there is a reticence to act based on our natural desire not to make a fuss. However, all advice points to the simple maxim of 'do as much as you can, as soon as you can'.

With the first stage of grief being disbelief and denial, it is of benefit to receive a number of expressions of condolence. Apart from letters and flowers, family liaison, whether voice-to-voice or face-to-face, must be monitored by a single person. This person will know how many people have contacted the bereaved and will therefore be able to offer advice.

When the School is notified, the notified staff member will contact the Head of the School, any relevant Housemaster/mistress, Head of Year and the Chaplain. Where bereaved pupils are in more than one Culford School, the Head of the School of the eldest pupil will assume the role in the column below. If bereaved pupils are also at a school other than Culford, the coordinating Head will liaise or ask the Chaplain to liaise with them.

The coordinating Head will ensure that the Head, Chaplain and any Housemaster/mistress are aware. They will arrange a brief pastoral planning meeting as soon as possible. They will ensure that the School Office adjust ISAMS to avoid unintentional hurt, inform other relevant staff, and send a letter of condolence and flowers. The Head will also send condolences.

The Chaplain will contact the family by telephone and arrange to visit if this is welcomed by the family; monitor family liaison and advise other staff as required; update staff on progress, particularly funeral arrangements; offer pastoral care to pupils. Attendance by staff at the funeral is important for the pupil's healthy progression through the various stages of grief.

The Chaplain will be able to offer support and advice on funeral arrangements. If appropriate, the Chaplain will send the parent or carer our School resources on supporting children and young people with bereavement. On-going pastoral support is in the hands of the tutors. Pupils take comfort from compartmentalising their lives in times of distress. Home may be difficult but school is normal. They often ask for no-one to be told but it is always helpful for staff to know and almost always helpful for their form pupils and tutor group to know.

Aspects of this policy may also be relevant in cases of the death of other close family members (e.g. siblings or grandparents) and staff should use professional judgement in applying this policy in those cases.

Actions in the event of the death of a pupil

This is a traumatic event for pupils and staff and the greatest care must be taken over the transmission of information. On hearing of a pupil's death there should be an immediate pastoral planning meeting involving SLT, the Chaplain and relevant Housemasters/mistresses and Heads of Year. Steps will be taken by the Head to inform teachers before announcing the news to the rest of the School. The cause of death should only be reported, with the agreement of the next-of-kin, if it has been officially determined. The Head may decide to write to all parents to allow them to explain to their children the meaning and implications of what has happened. If there is media interest, all enquiries must be referred to the Head.

The deceased pupil's immediate friendship group should be isolated and informed. Siblings must be isolated and informed by their parents or whoever the parents delegate this task to. This must be done swiftly to avoid hearing by other means. Siblings must be asked for their mobile phones, otherwise within a few minutes they will likely receive text messages of condolence before hearing the news themselves.

The remaining pupils concerned should be gathered and informed together of the news. Prayers and words of comfort will be expressed. This means that the information is delivered in a controlled manner; otherwise it will spread by text, social media and email, causing distress.

It is essential to allow pupils to articulate their thoughts and feelings, although some may not want to share them straight away. Sensitivity must always be shown as to when and with whom they are ready to explore their feelings. Tutors should monitor pupils' progress and report concerns to the Housemaster/mistress. Pupils should be made aware of the options of those who can offer support. It is important that School activity and events carry on wherever possible; vacuums of time encourage disproportionate levels of visible grief; teenagers in particular find it difficult and may ratchet up the levels of emotion felt by others.

The family should initially be removed from all mailing lists to avoid upset caused by sending inappropriate communications. However, care must be taken not to isolate the family and, in time, they may choose to receive mailings. Caring for the bereaved can be very demanding and the Common Room should be careful not to overlook their own needs. The Chaplain is available to offer support to the Common Room.

Parts of this procedure may also be relevant to follow in the case of the death of a recent OC who may still have friends and siblings in the school and be well known within the community.

Actions in the event of the death of a member of staff

The School is notified; this is usually by the widow/widower telephoning. The notified staff member then contacts the Head, Deputy Head Academic, Assistant Head Pastoral and the Chaplain. The passage of information should be limited to this group until a meeting has been convened to set in motion the following action framework:

Head or designated person	Chaplain
Notify the Head	Contact the family by telephone and arrange visit
Notify the Chaplain	Monitor family liaison and advise staff as required
Notify the Deputy Head Academic and Assistant Head Pastoral	Offer pastoral care to pupils, staff, parents
Arrange brief pastoral meeting as soon as possible to plan how information will be passed on	Liaise with other chaplain/church as appropriate
Notify as required: Other Culford Heads Housemasters / mistresses /Cadogan Housemaster Heads of Year School Office to adjust ISAMS Close colleagues Other relevant staff Parents Governors	

Send letter of condolence and flowers (The Head will also send expressions of condolence)	
Make arrangements for wake	

The following points should be noted: The designated person and chaplain should meet frequently; the designated person should offer frequent updates on progress of arrangements; attendance by staff at the funeral is important; on-going pastoral support is in the hands of the Chaplain.