

Ballycastle High School **Bereavement Policy**

Every year many children will be bereaved of a parent and many more will experience the death of someone special in their life.

In addition to these pupils, schools may also experience the death of a child at the school or a staff member.

It is almost inevitable therefore that at some time all school will have to deal with a death that affects the school community.

As children spend the vast majority of their time at school, teachers and staff members will be the primary source of care and support. Bereaved children will see school as a safe haven away from the turmoil of emotions at home and will look to trusted staff members for help.

Death is something that most people choose not to think about so when face with it we often find ourselves ill prepared.

The purpose of the Bereavement Policy is to help everyone involved at a time when there may be shock, upset and confusion, ensuring that there is as little disruption as possible, effective communication takes place and each member of the school community is supported to help them through a very disruptive time.

On the Death of A Parent or Sibling of A Pupil.

Before the pupil returns to school:

1. Headmaster, Vice Principal, Year Head, Head of Pastoral Care and Chairman of the Board of Governors should be informed of the death.
2. Staff should be informed of a death. Pupils should be informed in familiar groups.
3. Contact should be made with family to express condolences and offer support to the young person, (telephone, letter or a visit to the home).
4. Headmaster and Vice Principal should decide who attends the funeral.
5. If appropriate, year head should meet nearest relative to discuss any changes to daily routine e.g. house move, bus route etc. All changes should be noted in pupil's file.

When the Pupil returns to School

1. On the first day, pupil should be met by head of Pastoral Care or year head, reassured and made aware of channels of help if they wish to use them, e.g. form teacher, year head, head of Pastoral Care, school nurse.
2. Small group activities with some class members or close friends may be appropriate to help integrate the pupil back into school.
3. Unless parents advise otherwise teachers who teach the pupil should discreetly acknowledge the death when the pupil returns, this may only be a few words or a touch on the arm but if it does not happen the pupil may assume that the teacher does not care.

On the Death of a Pupil or Staff Member

Appropriate pastoral support should be provided for the whole school community. This may include:

- (a) Contact with the family by senior members of staff to offer condolences and support.
- (b) A book of remembrance being set up where the bereaved can express their loss.
- (c) A special assembly to remember the person who has died.
- (d) Deciding on the school's involvement in the funeral.
- (e) Counselling from outside agencies for those closely involved.
- (f) Collection in lieu of flowers.

If the press are involved in the reporting of a death or accident the Headmaster will consult with the Senior Management team and issue an official statement on behalf of the school.