

Dealing with Bereavement

If your school suffers a bereavement during this time of COVID-19 then implementing the bereavement guidelines in the way that is best for your community may not be possible.

Remember: To let the LA know. The Education and Learning line is manned 9-5 every week day and is looking to be manned over the Easter holidays.

The number is: 01473 263942. Email: EducationOfficersResolution@suffolk.gov.uk

This information will be shared with Educational Psychology colleagues and a member of the team will contact you. They have a wealth of experience in dealing with critical incidents like these so do follow their guidance.

Advice for the days ahead – to support our bereavement guidelines

While face to face contact is desirable when sharing sad news this is not always going to be practicable. It is envisioned for instance that a situation might arise where a relative of a pupil might die from contracting COVID-19 and this be relayed instantly via Facebook or other social media formats, way before a headteacher might convene a virtual meeting to share this information with governors or staff.

We recommend that you consider the following:

- 1. CONSENT** - Do ensure that you have the consent and support of the bereaved family before you do anything. Even if it is being tweeted or shared via social media, you should not share **anything** without first speaking to the family.
- 2. Who needs to know immediately?** Each case will be different. If it is a central member of the community, a teacher or pupil then everyone needs to be informed. However if it is an elderly relative of a member of your community this might not be the case. **YOU KNOW BEST!**
INFORMING STAFF - All staff need to be informed of every death. But it might not be urgent. It may be a case of having a dissemination tree as for snow days. So some people make one or two calls to share the news. Only headteachers will know if their staff are well enough trained and equipped to do this, not everyone is and not everyone will be able or willing to take part in this. Drawing up a telephone tree now would be prudent.
INFORMING GOVERNORS - Ring your CoG and ask them to help you inform other governors. Sharing the burden of contact would be best where possible.
INFORMING PUPILS Informing the staff and children in school can be handled as the guidance suggests. Informing those learning at home is very difficult. Again think about the relationship of the children to the deceased. There might be a way of sharing through your online assemblies. Is this the best way? Do some people need a personal phone call – ie the good friends/classmates or pupils of the deceased? Can you use the website? **You know your families best so you need to manage in the best way for your school.** This might be best done through class teachers/tutors and possibly as part of a weekly check in call. Teachers will need time to listen to pupils and parents and will probably need the support of the wellbeing service you buy into. Be aware that some at home pupils are unlikely to get a lot of support in this situation so will need follow up calls. Ask advice and act on it.
- 3.** Be ready to be flooded with a wide range of responses and reactions. This is a very difficult time for us all so it is hard to know how our communities will cope when the virulence of this awful disease begins to touch our communities. Use every kind of help available, from the critical incident service (Suffolk County Council) to religious leaders, our diocesan team, experienced colleagues, unions and organisations. Prepare for scrapbooks, memorial services, fundraising ideas and many other ways of showing support. We will be thinking of you.