



Archbishop Holgate's School

A Church of England Academy

Bereavement Policy

This policy explains how the school will respond in the event of a tragic event.

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Member of staff responsible: Deputy Head: Pastoral Care

Governing sub-committee: Pastoral

Archbishop Holgate's School is committed to developing to the full, the potential of each member of the school community, within the context set by its mission, its strategic aims, and its Christian values as a Church of England Academy.

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Vision and Values of Archbishop Holgate's School

As a Church of England school we strive to ensure that all of our young people are cared for, given every opportunity to develop through academic study, to grow personally and spiritually and to live into being those Values we hold dear in our community and in wider society. Our role as a Church school is to help nurture both academic excellence and to help shape young people who can make a significant contribution to the community they serve. Key to this is a clear recognition that all students have individual gifts and talents and with support every young person can flourish.

Archbishop Holgate's School is distinctive and effective as a Church of England school because our Christian vision and values are very explicit and drive all areas of school life. Our Vision is one which combines Values, Care and Achievement.

“A threefold cord is not easily broken.” Ecclesiastes 4:12

Through this vision we seek to be a Church of England School which is deeply Christian. As such, the three themes of our vision, Values, Care and Achievement are deliberately expressed in that order, our distinct Christian Values help ensure that every child is cared for as an individual and this in turn will help them to succeed academically.

Our school values of **Justice**, **Compassion**, **Forgiveness** and **Trust** have been embedded across our school community and permeate all areas of school life.



We value the Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health of all our students and staff. We have effective practices and provisions in place to support and promote emotional wellbeing and mental health, through our **'4 steps to wellbeing'** (#AHS Cares, #SelfCare, #SelfHelp, #Support).

This policy is to complement our vision and values and to enable the school to allow all members of Archbishop Holgate's community to live them into being every day.

Statement of intent

It is a sad but necessary task for every school, at one time or another, to address the death of a member of the school community. Bereavement can have a varied effect on individuals and it is important to remember that both staff and pupils will react in very different ways. This policy has been created to establish a flexible structure for the handling of such an event and establishes how the school will respond when such a tragedy occurs. The policy is written to underpin the school's four Christian values.

1. Legal framework

1.1. This policy has due regard to statutory legislation, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Employment Rights Act 1996
- The Equality Act 2010

2. When a death occurs

2.1. In the event of a death, the Head teacher, or Deputy Head teacher in their absence, will be the primary point of contact. The Chaplains will be informed and included in the schools planned initial response and appropriate support to be offered. Members of the Senior Leadership team and the Pastoral team may be contacted to consult and help provide support.

3. Traumatic circumstances

3.1. If the death occurs in particularly traumatic circumstances, such as suicide or murder, bereavement support specialists may be utilised such as the following:

- The Samaritans: <http://www.samaritans.org/>
- The Educational Psychology Service:
https://www.york.gov.uk/info/20166/special_educational_needs_and_disabilities/529/educational_psychology
- The Compassionate Friends: <http://www.tcf.org.uk/>

4. Headteacher's role

4.1. It is the role of the Headteacher to gather factual information regarding the death. They will consult the family of the deceased to ascertain their wishes regarding the sharing of information. This accurate information will be shared quickly so that rumours and assumptions do not spread and cause the family further distress.

- 4.2. The Headteacher is also responsible for preparing a letter to parents / carers explaining the event which will be distributed at the end of the school day.

5. Informing staff and pupils

- 5.1. All staff will be informed straight away before pupils are told. As soon as staff have been told pupils will be informed as appropriate. Staff will be given guidance by SLT on the approach to use.
- 5.2. The school will seek to identify and offer additional support to pupils and staff who are thought to be particularly impacted, such as close friends of the victim or who witnessed the event.

6. Social networking and the policy

- 6.1. Archbishop Holgate's School will make every effort to handle the event and the communication in a sensitive and efficient manner. It is the school's policy that no information be shared regarding the event using social media by staff or pupils until the facts have been established and all family members, friends and colleagues have been informed. Respect and empathy are key to ensuring the bereaved do not face unnecessary trauma.

7. The death of a pupil

- 7.1. Support will be provided for the whole school community. Pastoral staff may be deployed to provide support and comfort.
- 7.2. Designated areas (such as the school chapel) may be established to provide pupils a place to reflect during the day.
- 7.3. A book of remembrance may be set up in an appropriate location such as the school hall at an appropriate time.
- 7.4. Staff will be provided the opportunity to meet as a group at the end of the school day to discuss any concerns and difficulties and for support.
- 7.5. The Headteacher, in consultation with the chair of governors, will discuss and draft an official statement on behalf of the school and will decide how the press, if at all, will be involved.
- 7.6. Pupils with a particularly close relationship to the deceased will be told one-to-one or in a separate group.
- 7.7. Pupils will be encouraged to share their feelings and discuss the event and death in a structured and supportive environment. Services of remembrance may be offered.

- 7.8. Staff will be encouraged to be honest and open about their feelings.
- 7.9. Minimum disruption to the school timetable is ideal. Structure and regularity will ensure pupils are not overwhelmed. However, pupils who feel too distressed to attend lessons will be allowed to go to the areas designated previously, including the SSR and, where appropriate, the chapel.

8. The death of a staff member

- 8.1. Support will be provided for the whole school community. Pastoral staff may be deployed in counselling roles to provide support and comfort.
- 8.2. Designated areas (such as the school chapel) may be established to provide pupils a place to reflect during the day.
- 8.3. A book of remembrance may be set up in an appropriate location such as the school hall at an appropriate time.
- 8.4. Services of remembrance may be offered.
- 8.5. Staff will be provided the opportunity to meet as a group at the end of the school day to discuss any concerns and difficulties and for support.
- 8.6. The head teacher, in consultation with the chair of governors, will discuss and draft an official statement on behalf of the school and will decide how the press, if at all, will be involved.
- 8.7. Staff members with a particularly close relationship to the deceased will be offered specialist support, including appropriate cover if applicable.
- 8.8. Pupils will be informed through an agreed and consistent manner. This may take the form of an extended form time or assembly as appropriate.
- 8.9. Pupils with a particularly close relationship to the deceased will be told one-to-one or in a separate group.
- 8.10. Minimum disruption to the school timetable is ideal. Structure and regularity will ensure pupils are not overwhelmed. However, flexibility may be required and great sensitivity will be shown when determining how lessons will be covered following the death.

9. The death of a pupil's family member

- 9.1. If the death occurs while the pupil is at school, it is preferable for a family member of the pupil (preferably a parent) to come to the school and inform the child. A member of the pastoral staff can be present if required.
- 9.2. If the above is not an option, arrangements will be made to transport the pupil to their home and family.

- 9.3. In some circumstances it may be necessary for a member of the Senior Leadership Team to inform the student. In this instance, a member of staff close to the pupil can also be present.
- 9.4. The school will liaise with the pupil's family to determine their wishes before notifying pupils if appropriate.
- 9.5. The pupil's peers will be informed as to how the pupil wishes to communicate/respond to the incident. This could be talking openly about the death or asking for respect and privacy, letting the pupil talk about it in their own time.
- 9.6. The Headteacher will delegate a staff member to liaise with the family regarding their wishes for the funeral and/or the sending of flowers/cards.
- 9.7. It can be expected that the bereaved pupil may have a reduced capacity for school work immediately following the death. They will be allowed time to recover and given any extra help and support necessary. On-going support will be offered in the Student Support Room as needed (SSR).

10. The death of a pupil or staff member on a school trip

- 10.1. In the event of a death during a school trip an emergency management team will be established by the Headteacher. See critical incident policy for further guidance.
- 10.2. Those who have witnessed the death will be the priority and they will be offered support.
- 10.3. The Headteacher will consult with emergency personnel to determine the timeliest and appropriate method for informing the deceased's family.
- 10.4. A designated staff member will undertake the role of school liaison, and if possible, a designated phone line for enquiries will be established.
- 10.5. The emergency management team will organise support and counselling as necessary.

11. Examinations/assessments

- 11.1. Bereavement can have serious effects of a pupil's ability to work, study and undertake examinations and assessments. The school is mindful of this and the following considerations will be made to assist pupils.

12. Pupils currently taking examinations or assessments

- 12.1. Pupils who are taking examinations during a time of bereavement are likely to be affected by the loss.

- 12.2. The circumstances will be reported to the appropriate examination board and they will decide on where special considerations will be applied.
- 12.3. The relationship between the pupil and the person concerned will be a determining factor in the examination board's decision as will the proximity to the exam from the death.

13. Pupils missing examinations or assessments

- 13.1. This will be a very rare occurrence but provision will be in place will it occur. If a pupil misses an examination due to the death of a close family member or friend it will be reported to the appropriate examination board.
- 13.2. The examination board will then make a decision based on the information provided by the school, as to whether or not to apply special consideration.

14. Funerals and services of remembrance

- 14.1. The school will always seek to respect the family's wishes.
- 14.2. The family might well welcome the involvement of the school community in the funeral but, there will be times where the family wishes to keep the proceedings private and this will be respected.
- 14.3. The School would always want to express their sympathy and support by sending representative/s to the funeral, as long as that fits with the wishes of the family. It may be that the family have thoughts on just who might best attend in that capacity, and we will seek to explore that with them, addressing resulting practical issues such as 'covering' as well as we possibly can.
- 14.4. The Headteacher will consult the family and, in turn, staff and pupils in determining the appropriate sending of flowers, cards or the holding of a collection.
- 14.5. A permanent form of remembrance may also be considered.