

Deceased College Student Policy 2023/24



1. Purpose of Policy

Although such an event is extremely rare, it is possible that at some point the College may experience the death of a student. Bereavement may have a huge impact on the College community. It is important that the College is able to respond effectively to what may be a traumatic or tragic situation. This should be done in a way where disruption is kept to a minimum and individual students and staff feel valued and supported.

The death of a student is a serious matter for the whole of the college community, especially the student's close friends, peers, tutor, and teachers. Therefore, it is important that the college reacts to events in a way that acknowledges the loss properly, respecting cultural and religious traditions, while dealing sensitively with the aftermath and supporting the bereaved.

The Sixth Form Bolton is committed to the wellbeing and emotional health of its students and all staff and will work towards this in all aspects of college life and to provide an ethos and environment that supports and prepares students for coping with loss.

1.1 This policy is intended to:

The purpose of the policy is to ensure that in the event of the death of a student that any matters related to this are dealt with accordingly and with sensitivity. It provides guidance and a step-by-step checklist for who needs to do what and when in the event of a student death. Much of the procedure may equally be relevant to the death of a member of staff, although the Personnel department would lead in this situation.

1.2 Aims of the policy

- To ensure that any administrative systems are updated accordingly to avoid unnecessary contact with the family.
- To ensure there is a key person to liaise with the family.
- To ensure any students who remain in College can receive bereavement advice, guidance or counselling as necessary.
- To ensure exam boards are notified accordingly.
- To deal with the media if required.
- To provide students with practical guidance related to bereavement.
- To provide staff with practical guidance related to bereavement.

1.3 Procedure

The appended procedure is designed to ensure that a checklist is completed in order that necessary actions are completed and within a required timescale.

2.Scope

- 2.1 This policy is applicable to all staff and students within The Sixth Form College

3.Definitions

- 3.1 *College* – The Sixth Form, Bolton
- 3.2 For the purpose of this policy, the term “student” refers to a person who is enrolled but not yet embarked on their course, a current student or a former student.

4.Policy

A coordinated response is essential both to support students and staff affected by the death and to ensure that the deceased student’s family receives appropriate support and consideration. These guidelines will outline the essential stages in dealing with a student death. The primary points of contact in this policy are the Principal and/or the Deputy Principal who will share information with the College community in a timely way.

INITIAL NOTIFICATION

The report of death may come from various sources such as a relative or friend, another student, a member of staff or elsewhere and this may be done in person, by mail or e-mail or via a telephone call. Information about a student death could be given to any member of the academic or support staff. The death should be reported immediately to the Principal or another member of SMT who will first verify the information. For students who are under 18 or are vulnerable the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Safeguarding Lead should be notified. They will then contact the Child Death Overview Panel of the Local Safeguarding Children Board where the student lived who will provide further information and clarification. This contact may also assist with verification (below).

VERIFICATION OF DEATH

It is essential to verify that the report is true before taking any action. Whether or not the report is true, it would be insensitive to contact the student’s home to verify. The local police will usually be able to verify the death of a person; it is not a confidential matter. However, it is important not to speculate on the cause of death until the facts are known. Once verified, the Principal or another member of SMT will ensure that the student’s Head of Department, Designated Safeguarding Lead and Heads of Marketing and Student Information are all informed.

ACTIONS UP TO AND INCLUDING THE FUNERAL

Identify one person to liaise with the family

Once the death has been verified, a member of staff should be identified as the most appropriate person to liaise with the bereaved family. This Liaison Person could be any suitable member of staff. Their role would include trying to establish if there are any known siblings or other close relatives enrolled at the college as specific support may need to be offered to these individuals.

Breaking the news to relevant parties

Students

Students in affected groups will be informed as soon as possible by either the Principal or Deputy Principal (See Appendix 1 for guidance).

The wider student community will then be informed by email. In general, there will be minimum disruption to the College timetable. The structure of the College day will be maintained, although there may be the need for some flexibility.

Information and Support for Staff

Staff close to the deceased student's such as their tutor and teachers will be informed as soon as possible also and in preferably in person. An announcement will be made to all staff at Staff Briefing by either the Principal or Deputy Principal, followed by an email. Staff must adhere to the wording of these announcements if students enquire about the death. This is to prevent potentially unwarranted communication from spreading.

The Principal will also inform the Chair of Governors, who will in turn inform the Governing Body.

The Principal will formally write to the student's family to express sympathy on behalf of the College.

If the media are involved in reporting on the death, the Principal will consult with the Chair of Governors regarding an official statement on behalf of the College. On no account should staff communicate directly with the media or discuss the student's death on social media.

Ensuring support is available

Students

The Principal and the Head of Learning Services will work to identify an appropriate offer of support and provide information on how to access on-going support internally from the college counsellor and from external support agencies.

It will be important to liaise with relevant staff, tutors and the college counsellors in order to identify who might be vulnerable, so that support is quickly put in place. Teaching staff and relevant support staff should be aware that because some students may feel they cannot currently attend classes, there will need to be flexibility as regards sitting mock exams and providing extended deadline dates for homework/non-examined assessment. Initial reactions to grief may range from tears, shutting down, strong and sudden anger, nightmares, as well as no obvious reaction. Young people will often gain the

support they need from their social groups and families. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' reactions to grief. Feelings are fluid and can change over time. For some people the impact is not fully felt until much later, often around the anniversary or through another loss and it is at that time they may need support.

Staff

Support for staff who have been directly involved with grieving students will be important. They should have the opportunity to meet to share their feelings and reactions. Staff may wish to see the college counsellor or request external support from the Personnel department and these requests will be dealt with sensitively and on a strictly confidential basis. A member of staff may feel they are not able to attend work in the immediate aftermath of the death; requests for compassionate leave will be dealt with sensitively and on an individual basis.

Letter of condolence

The college will send a letter of condolence to the family. It could include a request for information about funeral arrangements to avoid having to trouble the bereaved family with a phone call. The condolence letter should be signed by the Principal (See appendix 2 for guidance)

Notification for administrative purposes

The Head of Student Information will notify the student information team, exams officer and finance manager of the student's death to ensure that all communications are blocked that would be addressed to the student and his/her family. All central records relating to the student will be suitably annotated to record their death or remove them, as appropriate. (Appendix 3)

The exams officer would inform the relevant Exam Boards claim for any possible qualifications posthumously.

The Head of IT & Estates would be informed to remove access to Office 365 accounts.

The student's tutor will inform any work placement currently being undertaken or due to be undertaken by the student.

Book of condolence

A book of condolence may be made available to all staff and students to sign where the student group feels this is appropriate. Initiation of this would normally be through the student group.

Media Contact

Any calls or enquiries from the media should be referred to the Marketing team. If the student was featured in any promotional material from the college such as photography on social media, case study on the website or in the prospectus, it's important that the liaison person speaks to the family about this to ascertain whether they would like us to remove the student, where possible, or keep

them on our materials. This will also depend on the nature of the death. The Marketing team will be able to advise on a case by case basis.

Funeral

The timing of the funeral may vary, for instance, some faith traditions hold funerals very quickly following a death, while others do not, it is essential that the College is sensitive to the family's culture and abides by their wishes. Advice can be sought from the Equality and Diversity representative on these issues.

In addition, a funeral may be delayed awaiting the outcome of a post mortem in some instances. If appropriate, the Liaison Person will contact the family to ask if a member of staff and/or fellow students would be welcome to attend the funeral; if so, they will consult with the Principal about who would be appropriate to attend the funeral representing the college.

The family may welcome involvement of members of the College community but, equally, may wish to keep the funeral private. The wishes of the family will also be sought on the appropriateness of flowers; charity donation or other contribution the college could make. If appropriate and agreed with the family, students who were close to the deceased will be allowed to miss classes, if necessary, to attend the funeral.

The Principal or Deputy Principal will identify which staff and students may want to attend and the practicalities of issues such as staff cover and transport. The Principal or Deputy Principal will also consult with staff and students in determining what is appropriate in terms of sending flowers, a collection and/or any further more permanent remembrance.

ONGOING SUPPORT

Students who were close to the deceased may need continuing support following the event; in addition, emotional and/ or behavioural difficulties may arise at some time after the event. Tutors can help by being vigilant and sensitive, and/or by giving individual support, but if difficulties seem serious or persistent, they can refer for on-going support, as appropriate to their needs. The college mentoring team and college counsellor will be available to support students with bereavement and associated issues, signposting on to other agencies and support groups, where appropriate.

The wider student community will be made aware of the college counselling service that is available to them. It may be necessary to 'fast track' particular students identified as being in urgent need of support. Crucially, it is important that having identified any affected students, college staff provide continued support in the weeks and months ahead. In particular, students affected by bereavement should have their progress monitored carefully over time and offered appropriate support.

Memorial

The possibility of holding a memorial event in college should be considered. The Liaison Person should firstly consult with the family regarding their wishes in relation to holding an event of this kind, and then with relevant parties such as the student's tutor. If appropriate, the Equality and Diversity coordinator could be involved in this. The Liaison Person will arrange a suitable location and work with the Marketing team to support the event. The nature of the event should be relevant to the deceased

student and those attending, for example the music that the student liked, motifs of relevance like their favourite sports team, words spoken about them by a friend.

APPENDIX 1 GUIDELINES ON BREAKING THE NEWS

Staff should be aware of how to break bad news in person to someone who has been close to the deceased.

Breaking the news to groups of students or classmates of the deceased:

Where groups of students are to be told, the news should be given by a staff member who is confident to do so and has a good relationship with the students. The news should be given in a calm and clear way following the guidance given for informing the individual below.

Breaking the news to individuals:

The news should be given by someone with a prior relationship with the student or member of staff being told. It is preferable to be face-to-face in a quiet room where the person is seated. They should be warned that there is some bad news and then told directly and clearly. Be aware that they will be in shock for a while, and need time for the news to sink in.

They are unlikely to take in any information that they are given after being informed of the death. The presence of a close friend or colleague to give them support is important. It may be appropriate to ask them not to speculate on the cause of death until more information becomes available. Students and staff should be made aware of the support available from the college counselling service; this may include referral to external specialist agencies, if appropriate or if numbers exceed the capacity of the service.

APPENDIX 2 GUIDELINES TO DRAFTING A LETTER

Guidelines to consider when drafting a letter to significant others (for example, parents/carers, partner, spouse) on the death of a student. The following guidelines are intended to be helpful when composing a letter of condolence on the death of a student.

Any letter should be written as soon as possible after official confirmation of the student's death and should be addressed to the closest known relative(s) of the student. The Marketing team can help with drafting the letter.

In expressing sympathy, avoid using euphemisms for the student's death. Where appropriate a brief mention of the circumstances of the student's death could be included. For instance, I / We were very sorry to hear of (student's name)'s (sudden) death (yesterday, on Saturday, on 4th March etc). I am / We are aware that it will be no consolation at such a difficult time but would like to assure you that you are in our thoughts.

Some reference to the student's personal qualities and/or attributes as a student could be made, in terms of the loss to fellow students and staff who knew him/her and how he/she will be missed.

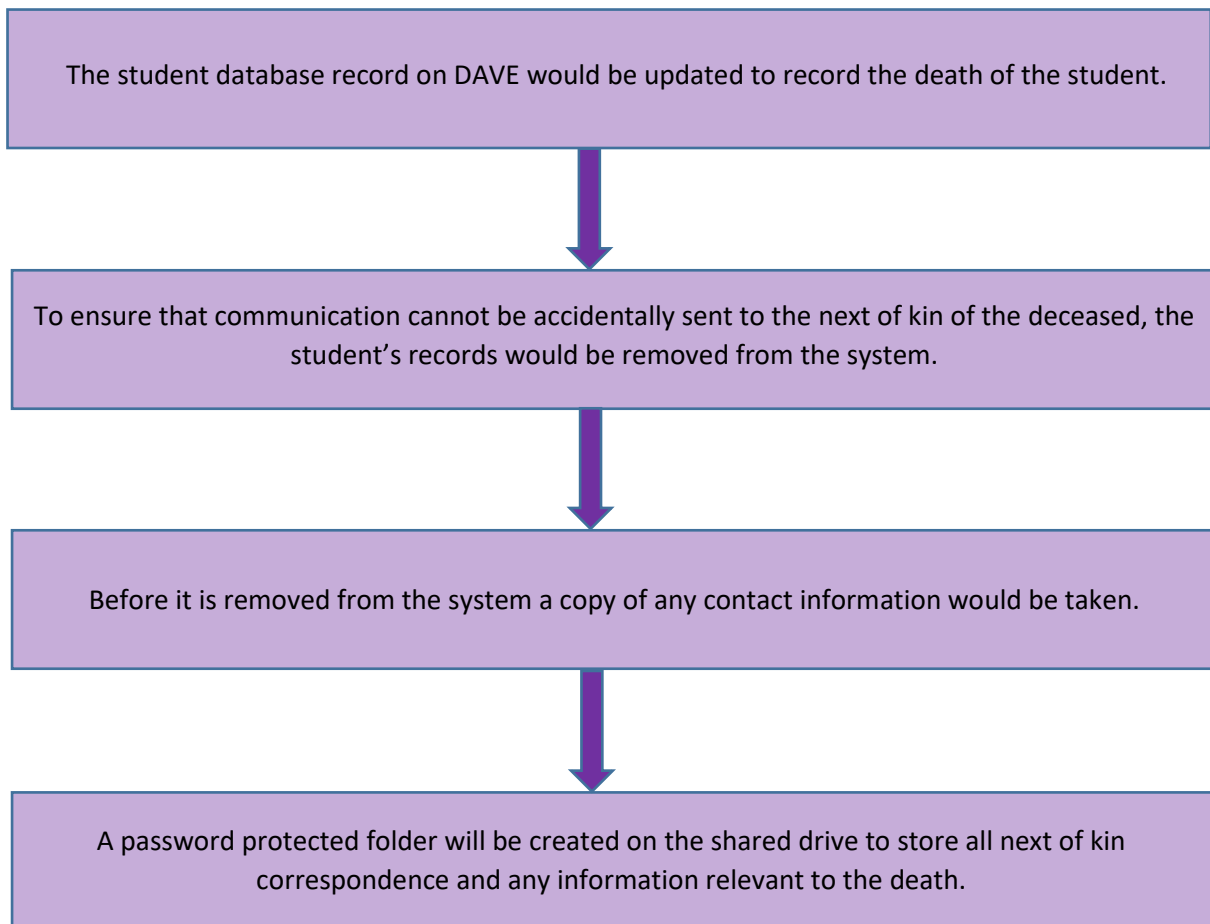
Rather than having to trouble the bereaved relative(s) with a phone call, the request could be made that they or their representative might let the college know of any arrangements for funeral/memorial service. For example, I / We would be grateful if you could let us know of any arrangements which may be made for the funeral, as I am sure there will be students and staff who would like to attend.

Please let us know if we can be of any assistance at this difficult time.

Yours sincerely,

The Sixth Form Bolton Principal

APPENDIX 3 ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESS



APPENDIX 5 BEREAVEMENT AND DEATH BY SUICIDE SUPPORT

In cases of death by suicide, addition to following the steps in above, it may be appropriate to seek advice and support from the organisations below.

Samaritans

See <https://www.samaritans.org/your-community/samaritans-education/step-step-stepbystep@samaritans.org>

or call 0808 168 2528.

PAPYRUS

Prevention of Young Suicide

<https://www.papyrus-uk.org/suicide-bereavement-support/>

Mind

Bereavement information and support

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/beravement/usefulcontacts/>

Support after Suicide

<https://supportaftersuicide.org.uk/>

NHS

Help is at hand <https://www.nhs.uk/livewell/suicide/documents/help%20is%20at%20hand.pdf>

APPENDIX 4 SUPPORT FOR COLLEGE STAFF

Access to support from college counsellor.

AOC Charlie Waller Trust Talking about suicide A guide for college staff
<https://charliewaller.org/resources/talking-about-suicide>

Read 'Help When You Need It Most' a Step-by-Step guide on how to prepare for a respond to suicide in schools and colleges.

https://www.samaritans.org/sites/default/files/kcfinder/files/HWWNIM_Feb17_Final_web.pdf

Name of Policy	Deceased College Student- College Procedure
Date Reviewed	Summer 2023
Next Review	Summer 2024
JCC Consultation / Approval	Not required
Governing Corporation Approval	Not Required
Cross Reference to other Policies / Source Documents	