

BLOOMFIELD COLLEGIATE SCHOOL

Bereavement, Loss and Change: Managing the Issue in School



Approved by the Board of Governors 22 June 2023

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Please note, throughout this policy, the term 'parent' is used to refer to the parent or guardian of the pupil.

SECTION 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This policy is one of a number of inter-related policies which are concerned with pupil welfare.

A number of pupils may experience bereavement, loss or change during their time at Bloomfield Collegiate School; such life events may induce grieving. Although there are many different ways to grieve, school routines, sport and homework may offer protection and normality to a pupil, especially when home life is in turmoil or circumstances have brought added responsibilities. In addition, grief may induce exhaustion or lack of concentration, affecting the pupil's work for some time to come. For some pupils, concern about progress in their academic work at such a time, may induce further stress. This policy outlines the ways in which pastoral support within Bloomfield Collegiate School may assist a pupil to cope with such personal challenges and, in consequence, underpin positive academic performance.

1.2 RATIONALE

Bloomfield Collegiate School recognises that not only does it have statutory responsibilities in relation to pupils' learning, but it also carries pastoral responsibility towards all pupils in its care. Therefore, this policy aims to: promote a sensitive and caring attitude towards the issues of bereavement, loss and change; to encourage a consistent, yet flexible, approach to such situations; and to provide information regarding possible approaches which may be adopted by those working in Bloomfield Collegiate School.

It is important to note that there may be occasions when it is necessary and appropriate for staff to consult with the Education Authority (EA) Child Protection personnel, Social Services and/or PSNI. On other occasions, parents may be advised to contact the relevant authorities themselves.

1.3 RELEVANT PERSONNEL

The School Safeguarding Team is comprised of:

- the Chairperson of the Board of Governors, Mr N McBride;
- the Designated member of the Board of Governors for Child Protection Mrs B. Conaghan
- the Principal, Mr G. Greer who is responsible for overseeing the general welfare of pupils; and
- the Designated Teacher for Child Protection, Mrs J. Wharry and her Deputies, Mr G. Greer and Mrs J. Waterworth

Each member of staff has pastoral responsibility towards young people in their charge.

Currently the Principal has responsibility for:

- co-ordinating action by teachers in respect of pastoral care;
- reviewing and updating the policy on Bereavement, Loss and Change: Managing the Issue in School, and making it available to parents; and
- reporting to the Board of Governors as required.

Dr C. Greer (Vice-Principal) and members of the Senior Leadership Team support this work.

The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator and members of The Learning Support Team assist pupils with Additional Educational Needs.

The Heads of Year are:	Year 8	Mrs S. Barrett
	Years 9 and 10	Mrs A. Hutchinson and Mrs E. Stevenson (TEMP)
	Years 11 and 12	Mrs J. Waterworth and Mr J. Mulholland
	Years 13 and 14	Mr J. Campbell and Mrs JA. Girvan (TEMP)

Each Form Class is allocated a Form Teacher. Selected members of Year 14 are appointed to the position of Mentors, two of whom are allocated to each Form Class in Years 8 and 9. Mentors work closely with the Form Teacher to support junior pupils. Members of the Year 14 Pastoral Team act as buddies to individual pupils. Training is provided for pupils undertaking these roles.

The Independent Counselling Service for Schools provides counselling support within the school day. If parental permission has been given, pupils may self-refer by filling in a form and placing it in the relevant box at Reception. Once competence has been attained, pupils may self-refer, even in the absence of parental permission.

In addition to the First-Aid Coordinator, Mrs T. McGeown, a number of staff members possess first-aid qualifications.

1.4 DISSEMINATION OF THE POLICY

This policy is available through the School's website. Copies are available from the School Office.

SECTION 2: RESPONSE TO BEREAVEMENT

Bloomfield Collegiate School will seek to respond to bereavement with sensitivity, acting in the best interests of all concerned. It is important that Bloomfield Collegiate School facilitates expressions of grief and mourning and offers support to everyone in the school community as appropriate.

2.1 THE DEATH OF A CLOSE RELATIVE OF A PUPIL

a. Immediate Actions

Immediately information relating to the death of a close relative of a pupil is received, and depending on circumstances, the Principal, delegated member of the Senior Management or Head of Year should make contact with the family by letter, telephone or visit.

Once the death has been confirmed, if possible, the appointed person will seek guidance from the family as to how they wish the news to be handled. For example, they may seek permission from the family to pass the information to Senior Management, Head of Year, Form Teacher and teaching staff, as this may benefit the pupil on return.

With the agreement of the family if possible, the Form Teacher should inform the class of the death of their classmate's relative. This may create opportunities for questions and discussion as to how they can help their classmate on return to school. Friends should be encouraged to acknowledge the loss and may need help in voicing their feelings.

In certain circumstances, the EA's Communication's Officer will be contacted, and a procedure for dealing with the media agreed. The Principal or other designated person (such as a member of the Board of Governors or Senior Management) will be the only spokesperson. In conjunction with the EA representative, that person will prepare a brief statement which expresses the School's grief at the death and explains the actions being taken to meet the needs of the pupils.

b. The Funeral

If possible, the Head of Year and/or Form Teacher, and a member of Senior Management should attend the funeral. The attendance of other relevant members of staff may be facilitated, as appropriate.

It is important that letters of permission are received from parents of pupils wishing to attend the funeral.

c. Return to School

On the pupil's return to school, the Head of Year and/or Form Teacher should seek an opportunity to speak with the pupil privately to express sympathy and offer support. Access to the School Counsellor should be offered, if appropriate, and the pupil reminded of 'safe places' (such as the Pupil Centre) to go, should grief overtake them. Other pupils/mentors, may need help/advice in supporting the bereaved.

However, as there are different ways of grieving, some pupils may prefer to develop their own support structures and choose not to share these with an adult.

Reactions to bereavement may include: shock/disbelief; withdrawal; insecurity; open distress; panic; aggression; anxiety; anger; guilt; inability to concentrate; sleeping difficulties; and physical complaints. Therefore, the Head of Year and/or Form Teacher should continue to monitor the pupil's welfare over the succeeding weeks. Two or three weeks after the pupil's return, the Head of Year and/or Form Teacher should speak again with the pupil to provide reassurance/support as required.

d. Additional Notes

Anniversaries and celebrations may prove difficult for a bereaved pupil who may revisit the death at new emotional and intellectual levels as she moves through the developmental stages. This may cause renewed grief or distress. Thus, continued awareness and communication are necessary as the pupil progresses through the school.

At the start of each academic year, Form Teachers should be made aware of all bereaved pupils in their class. Pupils who have suffered a close family bereavement at any stage during their time at Bloomfield Collegiate will have this noted under 'Medical Notes' in SIMS.

SECTION 3: THE DEATH OF ONE OR MORE PUPILS, A MEMBER OF STAFF, A CLOSE RELATIVE OF A MEMBER OF STAFF, OR OTHER MEMBER OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

While all of the above issues apply, the following action is also advised:

- the death/s may be announced at a whole school assembly;
- the Principal should make direct contact with the family, by phone call, letter or visit, as appropriate;
- belongings/books/work should be returned to the family at an appropriate time and in a sensitive manner;
- the Accounts Office should be made aware at the earliest opportunity; and
- as members of the school community who have had contact with the deceased will feel the loss and suffer varying grief reactions, the healing effects of a later occasion when the school community can come together to remember, mourn and celebrate the individual/s may help in the grieving process for all concerned.
- A policy entitled 'Suicide, Managing the issue in School' is also in place

Dates of Policy Review

Date Review Completed	Nature of Review	Date Ratified by Board of Governors
November 2010	Review of procedures	14 April 2011
June 2012	Minor amendments	N/A
June 2013	Minor amendments	N/A
September 2014	Minor amendments	26 February 2015
September 2017	Minor amendments	28 September 2017
January 2020	Minor amendments	26 November 2020
May 2023	No changes	22 June 2023