

# Hummersknott Academy Trust



## J – Response Plan to Sudden Death, Suicide and Bereavement within the School Community

Review Date: November 2021

Adopted/V1	V2						
Mar 2016	July 2019						

This document is designed as a guide to protocols agreed by the Directors, Governors and Senior Leaders at Hummersknott Academy Trust to best manage effectively should any member of staff or pupil (or wider member of the school community) die suddenly or commit a suspected suicide. This response plan is a recommended document from the DfE working in partnership with the Samaritans.

It is particularly important that the Trust responds to a sudden death or suspected suicide within 48 hours. This is necessary to maintain the structure and order of routine, while facilitating the expression of grief, and reducing the risk of imitative suicide or self-harm.

Academies with crisis plans in place are best equipped to deal with a death when it happens. Good planning for the aftermath of death makes it easier for people to respond effectively at a time when resilience may be low.

## **POSTVENTION TEAM**

“Postvention” is the term given to activities and programmes that are intended to assist those who have been bereaved by sudden death or suicide to cope with what has happened.

Hummersknott Academy Trust Postvention Team will constitute:

Principal/Headteacher\* – Chair  
Senior Vice Principal/Deputy Head – Vice Chair  
Designated Safeguarding Lead  
Senior Leadership Team

For logistical purposes it is also recommended to invite a **sub-group** as the management of this type of event will require a working party of no less than ten staff members. The sub group representatives, to be invited into discussions or instructed accordingly and at the discretion of the Chair are:

### **For Hummersknott Academy**

College Managers, School Counsellor and Faculty Leaders

### **For Skerne Park Academy**

Senior Leadership Team, Home/School Family Liaison Officer

\*In the absence of the Principal/Headteacher or if it is not suitable for him/her to reasonably continue the duties of Chair, the Senior Vice Principal/Deputy Head Teacher will conduct these duties.

This group will meet at 8.00am if news has broken overnight of a sudden death or suicide. If news breaks during the working day the group will meet at the earliest possible convenience.

## **FIRST DAY**

### **PLANNED PROCEDURE**

1. It is highly probable that school will be contacted by parents and other outlets before it has been possible to establish factual information. In this instance the phones are to be staffed by Reception who will advise all callers that ‘school is open and that this is the only information that is available at this time’. Staff who receive calls on their direct dial number will give the caller the same message, that ‘school is open and this is the only information that is available at this time’.
2. The Academy’s Safeguarding Lead will contact Police Safeguarding (01325 742027) to establish the nature of the death and whether it is a sudden death or suspected suicide. He/she will bring official guidance to the initial Postvention Team meeting where at all possible. In the event that this cannot be established before 8.00am an initial meeting will still be held and a subsequent meeting as soon as possible afterwards.

3. The Principal/Headteacher will inform the Chair of Directors and Chair of Governors of the news.
4. It is highly probable that news will already have been spread possibly been embellished and many tributes and or possible conclusions may well have been drawn by members of the general public through social media. This is when an event is termed to have become 'viral.' A designated member of staff will contact CEOPS and Police Safeguarding to review the extent to which this has happened and direct the Postvention Team accordingly.
5. Many pupils will be arriving on site from 8.00 am onwards possibly highly distressed. Where possible, Form Mentors/Class teachers will direct these pupils to the **sub-group** who will be using the Dining Hall as a relief bay.
6. All other staff members will be instructed to an urgent staff meeting at 8.20am in the Main Hall where the Principal/Headteacher and Senior Vice Principal/Deputy Heads will break the news and give instructions for the day in a prepared statement. Any questions will be answered accordingly. This is to be completed on the first day and all subsequent days as is appropriate and necessary.
7. At the first bell students/pupils will be directed to registration, followed by assemblies shown below, to inform them of the factual detail to hand and instructing them of the planned activities of the day.

At Hummersknott Academy these assemblies will take place in two venues to minimise grief and shock as well as limit rumour across all year groups.

**At Hummersknott**

Year 7 - Pat Howarth Hall 8.35am

Year 8 - Dining Hall 8.35am

Year 9 - Pat Howarth Hall 8.45am

Year 10 - Dining Hall 8.45am

Year 11 - Pat Howarth Hall 8.55am

**At Skerne Park Academy** these assemblies will take place in the school hall to minimise grief and shock as well as limit rumour across all year groups.

Principal/Headteacher to attend the most pertinent assembly if this can be established.

8. After the completion of assemblies the bell will ring to signify Period 1 which will in this instance also constitute registration.

It is highly recommended that where at all possible usual routines are adhered to.

9. Relief rooms to be established throughout the school day to be manned by the Postvention Team and **sub-group**.
10. **If required**, during afternoon registration period, assemblies can be reconvened where messages are updated and relayed. Details of these assemblies must be circulated to staff via email prior to lunch break.

**At Hummersknott**

Year 7 - Pat Howarth Hall 1.00pm

Year 8 - Dining Hall 1.00pm

Year 9 - Pat Howarth Hall 1.10pm

Year 10 - Dining Hall 1.10pm

Year 11 - Pat Howarth Hall 1.20pm

**At Skerne Park Academy** these assemblies will take place in the school hall.

11. At 3.15 pm a close of day Postvention Meeting will be held to establish a plan moving forward overnight and into Day 2, SLT and working group members will attend.
12. At this juncture – ‘risk’ individuals to be discussed and individual management plans created for pupils and staff most at risk from depression or in need of specific bereavement counselling.

### **SUPPORT SIGNPOSTING**

The Trust will adhere to DfE recommendations and offer the following external support groups:

#### **Adults:**

Samaritans – Darlington – 01325464465 13 Woodland Road Darlington County Durham DL3 7BJ

Cruise Bereavement Care - Darlington: 01325 288633

Durham and Stockton: 01325 288633

Guisborough: 01287 610734

Middlesbrough: 01642 210284

#### **Children:**

Child Line: 080011111

Winstons Wish: 08452 030405

Young Minds: 020 7089 5050

### **MEDIA RELATIONS**

The Principal/Headteacher as Chair will be the designated media spokesman and all other contact with media outlets is to be deterred in the statement at the staff meeting.

He/she will issue a prepared statement and not deviate from this using the guidance in the Samaritans document “How to prepare schools.”

Media liaison will be concluded in partnership with the Samaritans Press team – 07943809162 or (0)20 8394 8300

This will be published on the school website.

### **FUNERALS AND MEMORIALS**

Memorials are an issue that need to be carefully managed to take into account the wide range of feelings that are likely to be displayed.

It is recommended that a two week memorial period is set up within a school. A designated area for floral memorials will be established in the school grounds. The School Office will forward any correspondence to the bereaved family on their request.

Details of this will be in the media statement and on the school website.

A permanent memorial may be erected for a sudden death – it is not however recommended for a suicide.

**Schools cannot control online memorials and other social networking activity following a suicide. However, students/pupils should be warned about the risks of online memorials – their comments may become public/published without their permission, online memorials can attract negative and hurtful comment and**

**anything that romanticises suicide can be harmful to those who are vulnerable. This will happen during the assembly (point 10 of the plan).**

If the deceased and their family are religious the respective Academy will seek to establish relations with the relevant religious designate at the earliest opportunity. If a humanist funeral is anticipated likewise the relevant body will be contacted. These bodies will be encouraged to partake in any memorial tributes with the school and likewise the school will have full representation at funerals. This will be coordinated by SLT.

Any member of staff may request to attend the funeral. The Principal/Headteacher will liaise with relevant staff regarding cover arrangements.

Pupils will be permitted to attend funerals of peers with their parents or carers.

In the event of the loss of a member of staff, staff may request to attend the funeral. A school memorial service may be arranged to allow attendance from the full school community.

### **RESPONDING TO SUSPECTED SUICIDE**

In some cases, where there is an on-going investigation or where the family does not want the cause of death to be disclosed (or reported as suicide), it can be challenging for an academy to decide how to proceed.

While the fact that someone has died may be disclosed immediately, information about the nature and cause of death should not be disclosed until the family has been consulted.

**In this situation it will be stated that the nature and cause of death are still being determined and that additional information will be forthcoming.**

We will acknowledge that there are rumours (which are often inaccurate), and remind students that rumours can be deeply hurtful, distressing and unfair to the deceased person, their family and their friends. The Behaviour Policy will be used as with any other incident of potential name calling.

**If there is an on-going investigation, the Safeguarding Lead will be guided by the Police Safeguarding before speaking about the death with students who may need to be interviewed by the authorities.**

If the death has been declared a suicide but the family does not want this disclosed, the Safeguarding Lead will contact them.

He/she will explain that students/pupils are already talking about the death, and that having adults in the school community talk to students/pupils about suicide and its causes can help keep students/pupils safe.

If the family refuses to permit disclosure, the Trust will state that the family has requested that information is not shared the Safeguarding Lead will inform all relevant bodies that the information is strictly confidential and should be treated as any other Safeguarding issue.

### **POST BEREAVEMENT MANAGEMENT**

There is no finite time from which the bereavement process may be deemed to have been concluded. The Trust will continue to use internal counselling mechanisms and external mechanisms as outlined to support staff and pupils throughout the process.