



Richmond Hill Primary Academy

Suicide Safer School Policy

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Approved	
Signed	
Version	1
Date to be reviewed	September 2023

Suicide-Safer School Policy

September 2021 – September 2022

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1. **Statement of purpose**

- Richmond Hill Primary Academy is aware that suicide is the leading cause of death in young people and that we play a vital role in helping to prevent young suicide.
- We want to make sure that students at our school are as suicide-safe as possible and that our governors, parents and carers, teaching staff, support staff, students and other key stakeholders are aware of our commitment to be a Suicide-safer school.

2. **Our beliefs about suicide and contributory factors**

Richmond Hill Primary Academy acknowledges that:

We acknowledge that thoughts of suicide are common among young people.

- **Suicide is complex**

We believe that every suicide is tragic. There are a number of contributory factors surrounding a suicide and the reasons are often complex and individual to that person. However, we believe that there are lessons that may be learned from each death that may help prevent future deaths.

- **Stigma inhibits learning – stigma can kill**

We recognise that the stigma surrounding suicide and mental illness can be both a barrier to seeking help and a barrier to offering help. Richmond Hill Primary Academy is dedicated to tackling suicide stigma. In our language and in our working relationships, we will promote open, sensitive talk that does not stigmatise and perpetuate taboos.

- **Suicide is everyone's business**

As a school, we recognise that students may seek out someone who they trust with their concerns and worries. We want to facilitate the reporting of any risks or concerns.

- **Safety is important**

We want to support our students, sometimes working in partnership with family, caregivers, external agencies and other professionals where this may enhance suicide-safety.

- **Suicide is a difficult thing to talk about**

We know that a student who is suicidal may find it very difficult to make their feelings known and speak openly about suicide. We will provide trained adults who are able to identify when a pupil may be struggling with thoughts of suicide.

- **Talking about suicide does not create or increase risk**

We will provide our students with opportunities to speak openly about their worries with people who are ready, willing and able to support them.

Those with personal experience have a unique role to play in the development and refinement of this Suicide-Safer policy. We will endeavour to involve anyone from our community who has personal experience of suicide, whether having struggled themselves or supported someone with thoughts of suicide.

3. Roles and responsibilities

- Our governors and Senior Leadership Team are clear about how we will respond in the event of a suicide.
- The Senior Leadership, Pastoral Team and Suicide Intervention Team will follow clear procedures about how staff will work together where thoughts of suicide or suicidal behaviours are known among our students. We will manage the sharing of information in a way that enhances safety.

4. How we can help ensure an active person-centred suicide prevention and intervention policy.

Richmond Hill Primary Academy has a named individual, K O'Keeffe, who is responsible for the design, implementation and maintenance of this policy. RHPA has an Inclusion Team whose members understand this policy and are trained in Suicide Prevention. This team of five people have undertaken Suicide Intervention Training so that at least one trained person is on duty

during our opening hours. The Inclusion Team will be the point of escalation for any concerns about a student or young person. The Inclusion Team will keep confidential records of students at risk of suicide to provide some continuity of care within the intervention model. These staff are:

- Mrs D Secker;
- Mrs K Cousins
- Mrs K O’Keeffe (DSL);
- Mrs M Lord (DDSL);
- Mr K Norton.

We will endeavour to ensure that all staff are suicide aware. This means that all staff inductions will include suicide awareness, i.e. how to spot signs, what to do and how to escalate any concerns to the Suicide Intervention Team (Appendix A). Sometimes it can feel hard to know how to talk to young people about suicide – but we need to. Suicidal feelings don’t have to end in suicide.

We will endeavour to ensure all students are suicide aware. This means that we will guarantee there is an annual programme of events and campaigns that equip our students to know how to spot signs, what to do and how to escalate any concerns to the Inclusion Team. These will include assemblies and PSHCE lessons. We want to create a community where suicide is no longer taboo and young people feel able to tell someone if they feel suicidal and ask for help.

We recognise that students may experience periods of poor mental health while attending our school. We will endeavour to put in place mechanisms which allow staff that have regular interaction with the student to be able to flag or review any concerns about individual students including suicidal thoughts. Ideally this will be flagged immediately using CPOMS. Students that are flagged on CPOMS will be reviewed regularly and routinely by Inclusion Team and the SENCO, so that patterns of concerning behaviour can be spotted and the necessary steps put in place to keep them safe, including meeting them face to face. Children are referred to **Me in Mind (CAMHs support team)**, **We also have two qualified councillors within the inclusion team who work with children considered to demonstrate signs of mental health issues.**

When we identify a student at risk of suicide and decide to engage external services, such as **Me in Mind**, hospital A&E departments or crisis centres, we have explicit guidelines on the pathways that apply (Appendix A). These guidelines will be developed in co-operation with the external services, and will be reviewed regularly as the provision of such services change over time. Mrs Secker will oversee communication with the media.

Ongoing support and development of our policy and practice The DSL and Deputy DSL will ensure that ongoing reviews take place and that processes are updated in line with best practice and that on-going training is undertaken when necessary.

Appendix A – Papyrus advice for staff: What do I do when I have concern about a school child?

Q: “What do I do when I have a concern about a young person?” A: A concern is just that. It is not a judgement or an outcome; it’s a concern. Whatever it is that makes you worried or questioning about the young person, may well be worth exploring. This may include a conversation with other adults (staff/parents/carers) but it is very important that the young person is your central focus. Check out how the young person is by communicating directly with them. Let the young person know what you are concerned about. What have you seen (do they seem sad or not their usual self?) What have you heard them say that makes you concerned? Is your instinct telling you that something is concerning?

Q: “How will I know if a young person is suicidal?” A: If young people are having thoughts of suicide, they will usually communicate this. However, this is unlikely to be an explicit verbal communication about suicide. Few young people feel that they can be open about suicidal thinking or tell someone when they are struggling with their emotional health and wellbeing. When suicide is part of a young person’s thinking, they usually show this in their behaviour, in how they interact and in how they communicate. We cannot provide you with a definitive checklist of things to look out for to help you to identify a young person who is thinking about suicide. That is impossible. Every young person is different. However, when you notice changes in the way a young person is behaving or communicating, and it is causing you concern, you must explore your concern with them. If your concern is because the young person says or does something to indicate that suicide is an option, your concern is now about suicide. The only way to check whether your intuition is correct is to ask them directly and clearly about suicide. The young person who is thinking about suicide may be longing for someone to ask them about this. They don’t need you to interrogate them. They don’t need you to ‘fix it’ for them. They just need you to ask. Just do it.

What things can I look out for? The first step in talking about suicide is recognising that a young person may be at risk. There is no definitive guide on how to know if somebody is thinking about suicide because anybody can be at risk – however there are some things you can look out for. Often young people thinking about suicide will have experienced a stressful event associated with a feeling of loss. This might be something others might consider to be small but hold great meaning for them, for example the loss of a family pet, or they might have experienced a life event such as parent separation, bullying or domestic abuse. People who are experiencing thoughts of suicide give out ‘invitations’ to ask for help. These may manifest themselves as changes in behaviour (self-harm, giving away possessions), the words they use (“I wish I wasn’t here”, “It doesn't matter anymore”), physical indicators (sleep disturbance, weight loss), or they may display overwhelming feelings of anger, hopelessness, loneliness, or a sense of being ‘worthless’. Almost anything could be an indicator and often the key is that if something feels not quite right it is worth trusting your intuition and exploring what might be happening for the young person.

How do I ask about suicide?

Ask them directly, “Are you thinking about suicide?” By using the word suicide, you are telling them that it’s OK to talk openly about their thoughts of suicide with you. You could also say:

- “Are you telling me you want to kill yourself/end your life/die/die by suicide?”
- “It sounds like you’re thinking about suicide is that right?”

- “Sometimes, when people are feeling the way you are they think about suicide. Is that what you’re thinking about?”

- “It sounds like life feels too hard for you right now and you want to kill yourself, is that right?” If they are not having thoughts of suicide, that’s OK. They will tell you so. If you are still concerned, then keep exploring why your concerns remain until you are clear that suicide is not part of their thinking. If they are not having thoughts of suicide, nothing is lost by having the conversation; you will have developed suicide-safety for and with that student now and for the future. You may have other actions to follow up on which help them with other issues arising from the conversation. If a young person indicates that they have been thinking about suicide, listen and allow them to express their feelings. They will likely feel a huge sense of relief that someone is willing to hear their darkest thoughts without judgement. Reassure them that they are not alone and you can look for support together. Let the young person know that there is help and hope. How do I talk about suicide safely? Here are some ways you can continue a conversation about suicide in a reassuring, safe way:

- “It’s not uncommon to have thoughts of suicide. With help and support many people can work through these thoughts and stay safe.”

- “There are organisations that offer support like PAPYRUS HOPELineUK. I can give you their contact details.”

- “You’ve shown a lot of strength in telling me this. I want to help you find support.”

- “There is hope. There is help available and we can find it together.”

- “It sounds as though things are really hard at the moment... Can you tell me a bit more?”

- “Things must be so painful for you to feel like there is no way out. I want to listen and help.”

- “Take your time and tell me what’s happening for you at the moment.”

- “It’s hard and scary to talk about suicide but take your time and I will listen.”

- “Can you tell me more about why you want to die?”

- “I am so sorry you’re feeling this way. Can you tell me more about how you are feeling?”

How are self-harm and suicide related?

Q: “I know that a young person has self-harmed but how do I know whether it is suicide-related?”

A: Self-harm is often a precursor to suicide but not always. Those who engage in self-harm do not all go on to take their own life. Those who die by suicide do not always have a history of self-harm. If you have a concern about a young person because of self-harm, you should treat it like any other concern. You may need to explore with the student what is happening for them and if you think that suicide may be part of their thinking, ask them directly about suicide.

Q: “I know that a young person is having thoughts of suicide – what do I do?”

A: So, the person has told you they are thinking about suicide. You may have asked them or they may have told you. This can be a challenging space for you and you may feel ill-equipped here. Be assured that you cannot make things worse by asking the suicide question.

Sometimes students will tell you or others that they are thinking about suicide during a class. If this happens you should respond in a calm and sensitive way. Don’t dismiss what they are saying. The

student is asking for help, and you need to respond. You might be feeling unprepared for the disclosure, but your calm and sensitive response will let the young person and others in the class know that they can talk about suicide openly and non-judgementally with you. As soon as possible encourage the student to move to a more private place, where you can have an open conversation about their disclosure. You should also check in with the class and let them know where they can find sources of support.

You will need to speak to the Suicide Intervention Team. However, don't underestimate the importance of what has been established by your asking the question or receiving the information that a young person has been thinking about suicide. That they have shared this with you means there is an increased level of trust. You need to tell the student that you must share information with others. You have to share with others that a young person is at risk of suicide and why they are having suicidal thoughts.

What do I do if there is imminent risk of death or harm?

Q: "I know that a young person has engaged in suicide behaviour – what do I do?"

A: If you determine that a young person has acted in a way that puts their life in danger, act quickly to keep them safe and ensure that there is no imminent risk. If they have taken an overdose you need to contact a School First Aider, immediately, providing them with as much information as possible. They will decide whether to contact the emergency services. They will then inform the DSL and Headmistress/Deputy Heads and the student's parents/carers. If the parent/carer is unable to attend school immediately, a member of support staff will accompany the child to A&E and wait there with them until their parent/carer arrives.

If the young person has taken steps to end their life it is important that the young person does not feel judged or shamed for their suicide behaviour. Try to remain calm, even though you might be feeling scared, confused, upset or frustrated. It is helpful to ask the young person whether they are having thoughts of suicide. It may seem obvious in light of their behaviour, but asking clearly about suicide allows you to have an open and non-judgemental conversation about suicide. Ensure that you are able to have a conversation confidentially and that other students are not around. You may have called for help, but in the meantime you might be best placed to stay with the young person and to talk about how they are feeling. Once you have determined that suicide is their focus – just listen. Ask them to tell you about how they are feeling. They might not want to talk, but you can let them know that you will remain with them in supportive silence, and if they do want to talk you are there to listen. Your reassurance will help the young person to feel understood and supported.

If you determine that the young person's behaviour has not put their life in danger, but there has been an injury, you must seek support from Tracy Danks (either by taking the student immediately to her, or asking her to meet you where you are with the student). You must also log on CPOMS as 'self-harm' and 'safeguarding'. This will be picked up automatically by the DSLs and relevant Pastoral Leader in school. If the behaviour in question is historical behaviour, then the focus will be on what the young person has learned from this behaviour and using that learning to keep them safe. All information and conversation logs need to be put onto CPOMS immediately.

How do I support a young person with their return to school?

Q: "How do I support a student back to school after they have engaged in suicidal behaviour?"

A: Before the young person who attempted to take their own life returns to school, the Inclusion Team and DSL will meet with parents/carers. When they meet they will explore what support is in

place, and also what further support the school can provide including what the young person thinks they need.

The young person who attempted to take their life may not currently be suicidal, however suicide may still be an option for them, or become an option again in the future. It is important that the young person has a Suicide-Safety Plan (Appendix F): a plan that they have created with support that details how they want to stay safe from suicide. The plan will be created immediately on the return to school with the young person – with them at its centre. The Inclusion Team will create the plan with them, not for them, but it must be created before the student returns to lessons to safeguard staff and students. The plan must be something that the student feels they are able to agree to.

The Suicide-Safety Plan will include the following:

- Helpline numbers that are available and appropriate - including 24-hour helplines.
- Safety Contacts: people and organisations that the student can contact when they feel they can't keep themselves safe, including a safety contact for when they are at school.

The Inclusion Team will arrange for regular 'check-ins' with the young person once they have returned to school to see how they are doing and to check the plan is ok for them. The Inclusion Leader will be prepared to amend the Suicide-Safety Plan based on the student's needs. It is a live document and may change over time. The Suicide Safety Plan might also include professional support from a counsellor or therapist during school time, which will be agreed in liaison with the DSL/Deputy DSL.

Can I share information with others?

Q: "What should I do next to keep me and the young person suicide safe?"

A: The focus here is on hearing the student and ensuring that you do what you can to reassure and support them. If you can, give the student space to tell their own story. Avoid questioning them or interrupting their story. They will feel a sense of relief having been able to say that suicide is part of their thinking. They may still need some further reassurance throughout. Be supportive as they share their story. Part of them will be uncertain about suicide. Some of that uncertainty will be clear to you; some of it will be less clear. Be patient in hearing them and when they are ready to receive your support to keep them safe, work with them to work on a plan to keep them safe. This may include slowly building up their ability to see who else they can have in their support network and what else they can do or not do to keep suicide-safe. A good Suicide-Safety Plan (Appendix F) will always include a medical practitioner and another resource such as a helpline (Appendix B).

Q: "Do I have to share everything the young person told me? Do I need to share the reasons why they are thinking about suicide?"

A: Confidentiality is not boundless. Make no promises to keep what they say a secret or 'just between us'. Be clear from the outset that you may need to get some help in keeping them suicide-safe. Make sure you keep informing the young person you are supporting that you may need to share some information with other people in order to keep them suicide-safe. The young person's parents/carers need to be informed of any concerns relating to the young person's thoughts of suicide or suicidal behaviour.

Helpful and unhelpful language when talking about suicide with young people

PAPYRUS recognises that language helps as well as harms. Using sensitive and appropriate language can help build awareness and understanding to increase empathy and support. You could say:

- "Ended their life."
- "Took their own life."

- “Died by suicide.”
- “Killed themselves.”

Unhelpful Language when talking about suicide:

- **“Successful suicide.”** Talking about suicide in terms of success is not helpful. If a student dies by suicide it cannot ever be a success. We don’t talk about any other death in terms of success: we would never talk about a ‘successful heart attack’.
- **“Commit suicide.”** Suicide hasn’t been a crime since 1961. Using the word ‘commit’ suggests that it is still a crime (we ‘commit’ crimes), which perpetuates stigma or the sense that it is a ‘sin’. Stigma shuts people up – students will be less likely to talk about their suicidal feelings if they feel judged.

Unhelpful language when asking about suicide:

- **“You’re not thinking of doing anything stupid/silly are you?”** This judgemental language suggests that the person’s thoughts of suicide are stupid or silly, and furthermore, that the young person is stupid or silly. When faced with this question, most students will deny their thoughts of suicide, for fear of being viewed negatively. This is dangerous. You become someone it is not safe to talk to about suicide.
- **“Unsuccessful or failed suicide”** Students who have attempted suicide often tell us, “I couldn’t even do that right... I was unsuccessful, I failed”. In part this comes from unhelpful language around their suicide behaviour. Any attempt at suicide is serious. Young people should not be further burdened by whether their attempt was a failure, which in turn suggests they are a failure.
- **“It’s not that serious.”** Every suicide attempt is serious. By definition: they wanted to take their own life. All suicide attempts must be taken seriously as there is a risk to life. An attempt tells us that the young person is in so much pain they no longer want to live. This is serious.
- **“Attention seeking.”** This phrase assumes that the student’s behaviour is not serious, and that they are being dramatic to gain attention from others. However suicide behaviour *is* serious. Students who attempt suicide need attention, support, understanding and help.
- **“It was just a cry for help.”** This dismissive phrase belittles the young person’s need for help. They do indeed need you to help: they are in pain and their life is in danger. They may feel they are not being taken seriously, which can be dangerous.

Appendix B – Helpers in your community

Local/national services that can help support someone who is actively suicidal:

PAPYRUS HOPELine UK (Support and advice to young people under 35 having thoughts of suicide or for anyone who is concerned about a young person.)

Call 0800 068 41 41 (this does not show up on the telephone bill). Monday-Friday 10.00am-10.00pm. Weekends 2.00pm-10.00pm. Bank Holidays 2.00pm-5.00pm.)

Text 07786 209 697. All texts and emails are automatically anonymised so that advisors do not have any details.

Email pat@papyrus-uk.org

Crisis (Distress) Centre/Mental Health Crisis

Forward Thinking Birmingham

Crisis team - 'I need to see someone today'

Call 0300 300 0099 and select option 1

Discuss concerns and arrange a visit within 4 hours if necessary

24 hour listening support

Samaritans

Call 116123

Email jo@samaritans.org (response within 24 hours)

Rape and/or sexual assault

Rape crisis

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

Call 0808 802 9999 between 12:00 -14:30 and 19:00 - 21:30 every day of the year

Rape crisis centres in the West Midlands <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-help/find-a-rape-crisis-centre?region=West%20Midlands>

Rape and sexual violence project (providing support across Birmingham and Solihull)

<https://rsvporg.co.uk/>

Call 0121 643 0301 for enquiries

Helpline 0121 643 4136 – see opening hours at <https://rsvporg.co.uk/services/helpline-support/>

'Our helpline hours vary and we have a 24 hour answerphone where you can leave your message, or you can email us on info@rsvporg.co.uk to request a call. Only leave a number if it is safe to do so.

Your call will be returned when our helpline is next open.'

Domestic violence hotline

National Domestic Violence Helpline 0808 2000 247 (24/7 service)

Men's Advice Line 0808 801 0327

Women's Aid <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/>

Refuge <https://www.refuge.org.uk/>

Child abuse hotline

'If you're worried that a child or young person is at risk or is being abused contact the children's social care team at their local council.' <https://www.gov.uk/report-child-abuse-to-local-council>

NSPCC

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/>

Child abuse hotline for adults 0808 800 5000 (Monday to Friday 8am – 10pm or 9am – 6pm at the weekends)

Email help@nspcc.org.uk

Report child abuse online <https://forms.nspcc.org.uk/content/nspcc---report-abuse-form/>

ChildLine hotline for children and young people 0800 1111

Chat online <https://www.childline.org.uk/get-support/1-2-1-counsellor-chat/>

Police/ambulance/fire services

Call 999 if you or someone else is in immediate danger, or if you need urgent help

Call 101 for the police if it is not an emergency

24 hour medical advice

Call 111 (NHS non-emergency line)

<https://111.nhs.uk/>

Homelessness emergency

<https://www.gov.uk/emergency-housing-if-homeless>

Shelter

https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/homelessness

Helpline 0808 800 4444 (8am - 8pm on weekdays and 9am - 5pm on weekends)

Webchat https://england.shelter.org.uk/get_help/webchat (9am-5pm on weekdays)

Shelter Birmingham 0344 515 1800

https://england.shelter.org.uk/get_help/local_services/birmingham_sifa_fireside

Mental health outreach clinic

Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health – assertive outreach teams

<https://www.bsmhft.nhs.uk/our-services/adult-services/adult-community-services/assertive-outreach-teams/>

Child and adolescent mental health service.**Young minds**

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

Young Minds Crisis Messenger – text YM to 85258

Birmingham mental health service for children and young people aged 0 to 25 -

<https://bwc.nhs.uk/forward-thinking-birmingham>

Sexual health and screening

Umbrella

<https://umbrellahealth.co.uk/our-services>

Call 0121 237 5700 (opening times at <https://umbrellahealth.co.uk/page/contact-us>)

Contact form <https://www.uhb.nhs.uk/forms-umbrella/umbrella-contact>

Attend a clinic <https://umbrellahealth.co.uk/service-locator?postcode=&filter=clinic>

Sexuality support

Childline

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/your-feelings/sexual-identity/sexual-orientation/>

ChildLine hotline for children and young people 0800 1111

Chat online <https://www.childline.org.uk/get-support/1-2-1-counsellor-chat/>

Mind – LGBTQ mental health support

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/lgbtq-mental-health/useful-contacts/>

Birmingham LGBT

<https://blgbt.org/>

Call 0121 643 0821 , email hello@blgbt.org or attend the centre <https://blgbt.org/contact/>

Children’s services**Birmingham Children’s Trust**

<https://www.birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk/>

Children’s Advice and Support service – if you are worried about a child

https://www.birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk/info/6/contact_us/38/worried_about_a_child

0121 303 1888 (emergency out-of-hours 0121 675 4806)

Family support services**Family action**

<https://www.family-action.org.uk/>

Family Line

Call 0808 802 6666, text 07537 404 282 or email familyline@family-action.org.uk (Monday to Friday, 10am to 2pm and 6pm to 10pm, Saturday and Sunday, 10am to 1pm)

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/homepage/148/support_for_families%20

NHS counselling support

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/counselling/>

<https://beta.nhs.uk/find-a-psychological-therapies-service/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/self-help-therapies/>

Alcohol and substance misuse**Frank**

<https://www.talktofrank.com/>

Call 0300 123 6600 (24/7), text 82111, email frank@talktofrank.com, live chat

<https://www.talktofrank.com/contact-frank>

Reach out recovery

<https://www.changegrowlive.org/content/reach-out-recovery-birmingham>

Aquarius

<https://aquarius.org.uk/our-services/birmingham-young-people/>

Carer support services

<https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/supportforcarers>

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

Religious/spiritual support

<https://www.bsmhft.nhs.uk/service-user-and-carer/service-user-information/spiritual-care/>

Legal assistance/victim-witness assistance

<https://www.gov.uk/legal-aid>

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>

<https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/> call 08 08 16 89 111

Debt advice

<https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/tools/debt-advice-locator>

Appendix C – How adults can support young people bereaved by suicide

[Cruse.org.uk/for-schools/suicide](https://cruse.org.uk/for-schools/suicide)

- If a child or young person has been bereaved through suicide this can place them under enormous emotional pressure. They may become entrenched in the belief that the person who has died ended their life as a result of something they perceive they did or not do.

Feelings following a suicide

- Feelings of intense anger directed towards the person who has died for abandoning the child or young person can also be common when the death resulted from suicide.
- Some young people who have been bereaved through suicide might be struggling with questions pertaining to why the person took the decision to end their own life. It is essential that the school liaises closely with the bereaved young person's family to ensure that the known facts relating to the death are clearly understood by the school staff.

Questions and guilt

- It is also vital that staff members are aware of how much the young person knows regarding the circumstances of the death. The bereaved young person may spend time contemplating "What if" and "If only" in an attempt to try and understand what caused the person close to them to take their own life. It is essential that school staff reassure the bereaved pupil that the death was in no way their fault or as a result of arguments or inaction.
- For example, a young person might believe that their mother ended her life because they argued about cleaning her bedroom. Try not to underestimate the bereaved young person's feelings of guilt and try not to dismiss them. Rather, explore with the young person why they feel guilty and what is it that they believed they said/didn't say, did/didn't do, that they feel caused the death. If you know why the bereaved young person feels guilty then you can begin to gently challenge this and reassure the young person that they were not responsible for the death.

Stigma and bullying

- Death through suicide can result in social stigma and many families can feel isolated within their communities. Similarly young people who have been bereaved through suicide can also feel excluded from school life and may also feel shame over the suicide of someone close. It is difficult for children and families left behind to try and understand why the person they were close to ended their life and this can fuel conjecture within social circles, communities and schools.
- Young people bereaved through suicide can sometimes be bullied by classmates as a reaction to the death and school staff should be mindful of this happening. A death through suicide can unnerve a community and can often be wrongly viewed as unnatural or a selfish act. There will be individuals who will view suicide as a moral transgression depending on their faith and cultural beliefs.
- It is therefore essential that the bereaved young person is not burdened with the opinions of others as this is unhelpful and potentially damaging.
- Similarly if the person who has died had a history of mental illness, the bereaved young person might become subject to comments about the person they were close to being "mad" or "deranged" by their peers. It is important that teaching staff reassure the bereaved pupil that the person they were close to was not deranged and if the young person states that the person was depressed or very down before they died, use this opportunity to explain to the student that being depressed does not equate to being mad.

How can school staff help?

- School staff should liaise closely with the bereaved young person and their family prior to the pupil's return to school and whilst they are at school.

- Reassure the bereaved young person that the suicide was not their fault and wasn't a result of anything they said/didn't say or anything that they did / didn't do.
- If the bereaved young person talks about ending their life their family will need to be told. Encourage the bereaved young person to seek help from Cruse and introduce them to the Hope Again website which is Cruse Bereavement Care's specialist website designed for bereaved young people. The family of the bereaved young person may want to discuss matters with their GP.
- Let the bereaved young person know that you/your colleagues are there to support them and that you will be available to them if they need to talk or vent their feelings.
- Be alert to the possibility of bullying. Young people bereaved by suicide can be extremely vulnerable and often a target for bullying.

<https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/tools/debt-advice-locator>

Appendix D – What do staff do after the death of a young person by suicide?

Papyrus advice

Responding to a young suicide, often the term Postvention, is used to refer to care and support given after a suicide. The following statements may help staff identify their own situation and what they might do in response:

Q: “I know that a young person from our school has taken their own life, what do I do now?”

A: This policy gives clear guidance about how to respond in the event of a suicide. The Suicide Postvention Team have responsibility in the event of a suicide at school.

Hearing the tragic news that one of our pupils has taken their life will bring up many different emotions for staff, and this is likely to be a difficult time for the entire school community, and beyond. Staff might be feeling upset, shocked, angry, guilty or numb – all of these responses are normal reactions to a traumatic event such as suicide. The school will ensure that all colleagues are looked after. We may get support from professionals such as counsellors and therapists to talk about how staff are feeling. After liaising with the young person’s family, the Postvention Team will meet with colleagues as soon as possible. They will ensure all of the adults working in school are invited: the death of a schoolchild can affect everyone in the school community. The leadership team will inform all colleagues of the young person’s apparent suicide. (It is only at an inquest that the coroner can conclude whether or not the death is a suicide. Before then, it might be helpful to say that the person **appears to have** died by suicide). If the facts are unclear, state that the cause of death is still being determined and will be shared at a later date. As soon as possible, the Postvention Team will ensure that the school’s administrators stop any standard communications with the family, such as sending school trip information home, to reduce unnecessary additional stress to the family of the young person who has died.

Q: “I know that a young person from our school has taken their own life, how do I tell the other schoolchildren?”

A: When the Senior Leadership and Postvention Teams meet, agreement will be reached on the words to be used to tell students about the death. (It is only at an inquest that the coroner can conclude whether or not the death is a suicide.) If the facts are unclear, the Postvention Team will state that the cause of death is still being determined and will be shared at a later date. It is essential that all staff communicate the same information to all students. We will try to tell all students at the same time to prevent some students receiving the news before others and then passing on the news to other students without support. We may decide to do this as small groups, year groups or classes. It is essential that we do not talk about the method the young person used to end their life. This can be unhelpful, unnecessary and dangerous. Talking about method can be speculative, it can intrude into grief and it can lead other vulnerable people to imitate the behaviour. We can be open with the students about why we won’t engage in conversations about the method the young person used to end their life; letting them know that it is unhelpful and that we want to ensure their safety and wellbeing. The Headmistress may decide to give students and staff time off to be with their families. The Postvention Team will provide opportunities for students to express their emotions and identify strategies for managing them. Staff might not be the most appropriate people to facilitate this and therefore, we may engage professionals such as counsellors and therapists to further support students through their responses to the suicide. They will be able to provide more specialist support. The Postvention Team can also access support from the organisations listed as members of the Support After Suicide Partnership: <http://supportaftersuicide.org.uk/>

The Postvention Team will debrief at the end of the day with colleagues. They will talk about how the day has gone, what went well, and what may have been difficult. The team may want to raise concerns about some of the students and their responses so the wider Senior Leadership and Pastoral Teams are aware. Checking in with colleagues and talking about the experience of the day before going home may help staff to manage their feelings.

Q: “How can I support my students after a suicide at our school?”

A: Reassure students that grief is a normal response to death, and there is no wrong or right way to grieve. It is important not to panic, but to acknowledge how your students are feeling – their pain and distress is a normal response to what has happened. They might be feeling lots of different emotions, such as sadness, fear, anxiety, shock, guilt, and anger. Their distress might also manifest in their behaviour; they might be tearful, distressed, ‘act out’, be withdrawn or hyperactive. They may become very aware, perhaps for the first time, of their mortality and be scared of death. You might also notice a decline in their performance at school, or they may demonstrate regressive behaviour (e.g. in eating/sleeping/personal hygiene). It might seem strange to you that students who didn’t know the person who suicided are distressed – this distress is sometimes referred to as ‘disenfranchised grief’ – a grief we feel we don’t have a right too. Regardless of whether they had a relationship with the young person who has died, their response is still real and painful for them. It is important to believe everyone’s expression of grief and offer support. If a student wants to talk, find a quiet place and listen whilst they talk or cry.

- “How are you feeling?”
- “This is so sad and awful. It is ok to be so upset/ confused/angry.”
- “We are all so sad and shocked. Would you like to tell me about how you’re feeling?”
- “It is hard to know what to say, isn’t it? I am here if you want to talk.”
- “I can’t imagine what you are going through, but I wanted to let you know that I’m here if you’d like to talk.”
- “I’m not sure what to say, but I’m here to listen.”
- “Would you like to go for a walk together?”
- “Is there anything I can do to help you?”
- “I miss (name of the child who died)... how are you feeling?”

Q: “How can I support my students after a suicide at our school?”

Here are some examples of what not to say:

Avoid clichés such as:

- “Life goes on.”
- “Time heals everything.”
- “They are at peace now.”

Avoid assuming the faith and beliefs of the young person and their family:

- “It was God’s will.”
- “They are in a better place.”
- “They are looking down on you.”

Avoid assuming you understand how they are feeling, they may not understand how they feel:

- “I know how you feel...”

Avoid using judgemental statements, such as:

- “They were selfish to do that.”
- “They took the easy way out.”

When it feels appropriate, try to maintain a routine as much as possible – routines can provide a sense of stability during such a confusing and unstable time – whilst being mindful of individual

student's specific needs. Staff will also need support and guidance during this time. Time and resources will be made available. We need to be aware of our own grief and feelings. It is important to acknowledge that suicide can affect everyone throughout the school and beyond. We will ensure that there is support available for school staff as well as students at school, and that everyone knows how to access it.

Q: "How can the school appropriately remember the young person who has apparently died by suicide?"

A: It is important to remember someone who has died. It is also important not to pretend that something different has happened. However, there are some particular sensitivities here. In the first instance, the Postvention Team will consult with the family regarding the young person's funeral. If the family so wishes, the Postvention Team will then disseminate details of the funeral as appropriate. The school will arrange for flowers to be sent to the funeral, if this meets with the wishes of the young person's family. The Postvention Team will ask the family what they are comfortable with in terms of remembering their daughter. The school will discuss with the family the appropriateness of memorials as they can often become more than they were intended to be: they can attract undue attention, some of which may be unwelcome and difficult to handle, especially online memorial sites. Whilst it is important for the school community to remember the student who has died, evidence suggests that such memorials can romanticise suicide, which can be dangerous for others who might be thinking about suicide. The more attention the site receives, the greater the risk of simulative acts on the part of other young people who may be particularly vulnerable. PAPYRUS' advice is to remember the young person at some form of assembly and discourage prolonged use of memorial sites.

Appendix E - Policy drivers

Policy drivers for Suicide-Safer communities

England

GUIDANCE

Suicide prevention: developing a local action plan
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/suicide-prevention-developing-a-local-action-plan>
25 October 2016 Guidance

Suicide prevention: lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans young people
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-suicide-lesbian-gay-and-bisexual-young-people>
13 March 2015 Guidance

Suicide prevention: identifying and responding to suicide clusters
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/suicide-prevention-identifying-and-responding-to-suicide-clusters>
10 September 2015 Guidance

Suicide prevention: suicides in public places
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/suicide-prevention-suicides-in-public-places>
1 December 2015 Guidance

Support after a suicide: a guide to providing local services
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-after-a-suicide-a-guide-to-providing-local-services>
9 January 2017 Guidance

POLICY

Suicide prevention strategy for England
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/suicide-prevention-strategy-for-england>
10 September 2012 Policy paper

Suicide prevention: third annual report
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/suicide-prevention-third-annual-report>
9 January 2017 Policy paper