



## **SAMPLE LETTERS, EMAILS AND SCHOOL WEBSITE NOTICES**

### **Introduction:**

The death of a pupil, member of staff, governor or other close member of the school community can cause great shock and distress to all concerned.

Mobile phones, social networking sites and email can all quickly be the means of effective and speedy communication, but they can also be a cause of great speculation, often before the school has had chance to provide the information. If members of staff responsible for communicating to parents are in shock, then the situation is more difficult to manage.

The following letters are offered as samples, simply to support and guide colleagues if faced with communicating to governors, staff and parents, the death of a member of the school community.

***ACTION:** If faced with having to write such a letter, or post the information on the school website, please just take a moment to check the accuracy of the information*

Parents need to know how a school has responded to the death of a member of the community and what information has been given to their child.

This will no doubt include:

- Factual information about the circumstances of the death
- Information about how their child may respond to the news
- Practical suggestions to help their child to understand the news

Four sample letters are offered:

1. To inform parents of the death of a member of staff as a result of illness
2. To inform parents of the death of a pupil
3. To inform governors and staff of the death of a pupil
4. To thank parents after a time of support following the death of a pupil

Our hope is that you may find these examples helpful if you find yourself in the position of having to inform parents and indeed others of a death within your school community.

*“Supporting Catholic schools to provide excellent education where pupils flourish, and Christ is made known to all”*



## Brentwood Diocesan Education Service

### 1. TO INFORM PARENTS / CARERS OF THE DEATH OF A MEMBER OF STAFF AS A RESULT OF ILLNESS

Dear Parents/Carers,

It is with great sadness that I write to inform you that over the weekend, N..., a highly respected and much loved member of our teaching staff, has died. S/he had become increasingly poorly over the last few days and in the end died peacefully, with his/her family at his/her side.

The children/young people have been told of her/his death today in their own classrooms and as anticipated, a number of them are experiencing some significant distress. They were told the name of the illness was cancer and it was also explained to them that many times people with cancer do get better, but other times people die from it.

On behalf of the school community I have expressed our sympathy to her/his family.

I hope in the weeks to come we will find an appropriate way to celebrate the life that s/he had with us here at our school, together with the significant contribution s/he has made.

Personal end.....

### 2. TO INFORM PARENTS / CARERS OF THE DEATH OF A PUPIL

Dear Parents/Carers,

It is with great sadness that I write to inform you of the tragic death of one of our pupils, N..... from Year/Mrs .....class. We learned this morning that N.....had died after ( a short illness/tragic accident or other appropriate phrase ). Mr and Mrs ..... have told me that N..... died peacefully in hospital last night.

Members of staff have informed the pupils in school this morning and lessons were suspended for a short time to allow us to gather to express our individual and shared sorrow.

It is our intention, with Mr & Mrs .....’s permission, to hold a ‘Celebration of N’s.....Life’ on the same day as the funeral will be taking place in order for the whole school to be part of this time. You are more than welcome to join us at this service and we will post details on our school website as soon as times have been confirmed.

I enclose a leaflet which you may find useful with one or two suggestions that might help you to help your child with their grief.

Personal end.....

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**Brentwood Diocesan Education Service**

**3. TO INFORM ALL GOVERNORS AND STAFF OF THE DEATH OF A PUPIL (VIA EMAIL, MEMO OR SECURE AREA OF SCHOOL WEBSITE)**

*NB Remember to inform ALL staff including absent colleagues and peripatetic staff*

URGENT INFORMATION FOR ALL STAFF AND GOVERNORS:

TITLE: >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>

Further to staff briefing and phone calls made to governors may I confirm the sad news of .....N’s death ..... As colleagues were informed at the briefing at ( time ), N died ( provide factual information.....).

I (or ANO has spoken to (the deceased next of kin) and expressed our deepest sorrow and sympathy.

All pupils in school have been informed during the day (state how pupils have been informed). Parents and Carers will be informed by letter this evening and a notice will be placed on the school website. (Copy below) Mrs N... will respond to any requests from the media for information. Please provide her details to anyone requesting information and do not offer any comment yourself to external requests.

Needless to say, we are all deeply shocked to receive this news. Arrangements have yet to be made for the funeral and for a school memorial service but we will of course inform all staff and governors once these are known. In the meantime, the school chapel / quiet area is available for quiet reflection. Our School Bereavement Team will ensure that this area is always staffed.

May I remind staff and governors that you will find the ‘bereavement guidance’ that we approved for such times as this, on the school network headed.....

Further information will be made available through our daily staff briefings and via the secure .....

Please take care ....

Personal end



## Brentwood Diocesan Education Service

### 4. TO THANK PARENTS AFTER A TIME OF SUPPORT FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF A PUPIL

Dear Parents,

On behalf of all the staff I would like to express our sincere thanks to everyone for the support, sympathy and concern we received throughout last week.

The emails, texts, letters and flowers have helped ease our sadness here in school and for that we are all most grateful. Our hearts go out to Mr & Mrs ..... and their family. They will need our support for many months to come.

I know that despite their pain and sorrow they were greatly comforted by the love and genuine compassion shown by the whole school and the local community. The special assembly and funeral service gave tangible evidence of this compassion. The remembrance book will remain in the hall for the remainder of this half-term. Please do continue to add to it or visit the garden/chapel at any time. Its presence has been a tremendous release and comfort for many of us.

As at other times of the school year, please do not hesitate to talk to me or any member of staff if you are concerned about your child's reaction to N's tragic death. However, we also enclose some practical guidance for parents, which you may find helpful, and our school website lists a number of books and links to other websites, which may be useful.

Thankfully, what we have experienced as a school is extremely rare. I have no doubt that the experience has drawn us closer and has created new bonds but it will also leave a lasting heartache. Together I know we will ensure that it is also a positive experience, which will enable us all, children and adults to be more sensitive and compassionate human beings.

Above all else, perhaps this tragedy has helped us all put things into perspective and recognise our own and each other's humanity.

With our sincere thanks for your on-going support and understanding

Yours sincerely

Adapted from ©Rainbow Bereavement Support GB

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