

Letter to Parents/Guardians - Accidents & Critical Incidents

This letter can be used as a template for schools when they are informing parents of a tragedy, offering some advice and outlining what the schools response involves (brief details of the incident and, in the event of a death, perhaps some positive remembrances of the person lost). Where text/social media are used for communicating with parents this content will help with drafting.

[INSERT SCHOOL CONTACT DETAILS]

Dear Parent/Guardian,

The school has experienced (the sudden death, accidental injury, etc.) of [INSERT NAME OF STUDENT].

We are deeply saddened by the death/events. Our thoughts are with the [INSERT FAMILY NAME] family.

We have support structures in place to help your child cope with this tragedy [ELABORATE].

It is possible that your child may have some feelings and questions s/he may like to discuss with you. It is important to give information that is age appropriate.

You can help your child by taking time to listen and by encouraging him/her to express feelings. All children are different and will express their feelings in different ways. It is not uncommon for children to have difficulty concentrating or be fearful, anxious, or irritable. They may become withdrawn, cry, complain of physical aches and pains, have difficulty sleeping or have nightmares. Some may not want to eat. These are generally short-term reactions. Over the course of the coming days, please keep an eye on your child and allow him/her to express their feelings without criticism.

Although classes will continue as usual, I anticipate that the next few days will be difficult for everyone. An information night for parents is planned for [INSERT DATE, TIME, PLACE]. At that time, further information about how to help children in grief will be given.

We have enclosed some information which you may find useful in helping your child through this difficult time. Young people frequently turn to social media to see what others are saying, or to find out more. At these times it is important that you monitor their use and engage with them about what they read. We urge you to emphasise and reinforce the need to be extremely sensitive and careful about what they post.

If you would like advice, you may contact the following people at the school: [INSERT DETAILS].

Principal's signature