

20 April 2017

Dear Parents/Carers

It is with deep sadness that we are letting you know that a very well loved student in Year 11, Jake Whiteside, died yesterday following his battle with cancer. Jake was diagnosed with a brain tumour last year. Jake died peacefully at home yesterday morning, and not in pain.

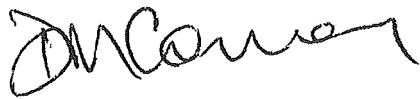
Lots of us knew Jake very well and he was an extremely popular student, loved by both students and staff. This was clearly shown by the amount raised for 'Wipe Away Those Tears' at the recent head shave event by Jake's close friends that many students attended. Many will have known him for his great sense of humour and fun ways. There will be many members of staff and students who are deeply affected by this great loss and we need to support each other at this time.

We have additional support in school from the Essex Educational Psychologists team today and if any parents/carers wish to contact them for advice, then please do. Please find attached, two documents providing advice for students and parents/carers dealing with grief.

Jake will be hugely missed by his family, friends and teachers and will be remembered very fondly by all who knew him.

Our love, thoughts and prayers are with Jake's family and friends at this very difficult time.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Conway', written in a cursive style.

Mr D Conway
Headteacher

Advice for Parents/Carers dealing with Grief

Here are ways that you may find helpful and comforting:-

- Acknowledging this awful event and the impact it is having on your child/children (and on yourself as an adult/parent/carer);
- Reassuring children (and your partners/yourselves) that there may be a variety of emotions that can be felt and that these emotions can change rapidly over time such as sadness, sorrow, anger, irritation, worries, anxiety and so on. There is no one way to feel when something so shocking happens;
- Feelings can be shown or not shown and there is no right or wrong thing to feel or do. Some people cry and it is ok to cry with or in front of children – it is helpful in a way for them to see how you manage this, to cry and to recover, to feel a little better afterwards and how to move on to doing something else;
- Children (and adults) sometimes need to lean on or return to things that help them feel safe or secure, perhaps extra hugs, checking in more, a favourite toy or bedtime routine. This is because shocking events like this make us feel a little wobbly and so it is helpful to do things that make us feel safe and secure and be reassured by things we know well;
- Spending time doing fun things, either alone, with friends or as a family. It is ok to enjoy life and to feel sad at the same time;
- Reminding children about 'regular things' like eating, sleeping, clubs and favourite TV shows. Sometimes big feelings can make people forget about their usual routines. Trying to live life alongside big feelings helps us to manage day by day. One parent told us 'today we will deal with today; we can think about tomorrow then';
- Talking about our memories of the person who has died can be helpful, sometimes doing things you liked to do together or going to places that remind you of them over time can make you feel a mixture of happiness and sadness but this is acceptable;
- Talking with other people about how they are doing is helpful to connect with each other and support one another.

Advice for Students dealing with Grief

Here are ways that you may find helpful and comforting:-

- If you want to talk about this tragedy that can be really helpful, so that we can acknowledge how awful it was and that it has made some of us very upset. It is ok to cry and show that you are upset, equally some people can feel incredibly sad and not cry which is ok too;
- Everyone will be affected by this in their own way. There is no one way to feel, or act when someone we know dies. You might find yourself feeling lots of emotions, all at once or changing rapidly;
- There is no 'measure' of how much a person grieves when someone dies. Sometimes we want to feel as though we are the person who will miss them the most. This is because we are feeling as though we really want to be connected to the person who has died. We need to accept that different people feel grief and react differently and that is ok;
- Supporting each other by listening to our friends and being kind to ourselves and each other makes us feel not only better but also that we are part of a team helping one another;
- If a friend tells you something that makes you feel worried about whether they or someone else might not be safe, it is ok to tell an adult so that someone can see if that person would like some help with something. You can talk to your family or any adult in school;
- When we are feeling big feelings you might feel a little wobbly or worried at times. There might be things that help you to feel better, maybe something you used to have or do when you were younger such as a favourite toy or game or routine you had with your family might help you to feel a bit better;
- Eating good for you foods and getting fresh air and exercise can help you to feel better for a while;
- It is a good idea to do things where you can have fun and a laugh – it is ok to have fun even if you still feel sad at the same time;
- Talking about your friend who died with other people can be helpful and make you smile especially when remembering fun or silly things you did together.