

HENDON SCHOOL

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'Learning Together Across the World'

Thursday 5th December 2024

Dear Parent / Carer,

It is with great sadness that we inform you of the passing of Mr Patrick Guthrie, our teacher of English and Film Studies and Year 10 form tutor. Our thoughts are with his family and friends.

Mr Guthrie was a kind and gentle member of our school community and he will be deeply missed. We understand that it may be difficult for students, staff and parents as we process this loss.

It is normal for students to feel a range of emotions and we are here to help guide them through this period of grief. Our student support team are available to meet with students who may need assistance or simply wish to talk and additional counsellors will be on site over the next week. Students have been given the opportunity to write about their memories of Mr Guthrie or a letter of condolence to his family.

During this challenging time, we encourage you to also offer support if your child wants to talk to you today or at some time in the future. On the second page of this letter we have attached information which you may find useful in helping your child through this difficult time.

Although classes will continue as usual we anticipate that the next few days will be difficult for everyone. This is a time to be especially sensitive to each others' feelings and to look out for each other. If you have any questions or would like additional support please do not hesitate to reach out to us at info@hendonschool.co.uk

Thank you for your understanding during this time
Kind regards

Rhona Povey and Craig McGuire
Headteachers of Hendon School

Information for Parents

WAYS TO HELP YOUR CHILD THROUGH A DIFFICULT TIME

Children do not need to be taught how to grieve. They will do it naturally and in healthy ways if we allow them and if we provide a safe atmosphere, permission and example to do so.

- Listen carefully. Let them tell their story. Tell them that the reactions they are having are normal. Take time to listen and answer questions according to their age.
- It is important that you are strong enough to bear whatever your child wants to talk about and to answer their questions.
- Let them know their feelings are important and give plenty of reassurance and affection.
- Keep explanations simple and be honest. Don't try to hide your own sadness or grief but try not to overwhelm them with your feelings and responses.
- Keep to routines and patterns as much as possible and take things one day at a time.
- Don't tell them that they are 'lucky it wasn't worse'. People are not consoled by such statements. Instead, tell them that you are sorry such an event has occurred, and you want to understand and help them.
- Be aware that changes such as clinging or aggressive behaviour or physical problems may be an expression of grief. Do not be surprised by changes in behaviour or personality. They will return to their usual selves in time.
- Don't take their anger or other feelings personally. Help them to understand the relationship between anger and trauma. Help them find safe ways to express their feelings e.g. by drawing, exercise, or talking.
- Help them to understand that defiance, aggression and risk behaviour is a way to avoid feeling the pain, hurt and or fear they are feeling.
- Pay extra attention, spend extra time with them, be more nurturing and comforting. When going out, let them know where you are going and when you will be back. If you are out for a long time, telephone and reassure them.
- Tolerate regressive behaviour such as nail biting, thumb sucking, or the need for a nightlight.
- Share your own experience of being frightened of something and getting through it.
- If they are feeling guilt or shame, emphasise that they did not choose for this to happen and that they are not to blame. Even if they were angry with the person who died, or had been mean to them, this did not make it happen.
- Don't stop them seeing friends. It is important to have support from friends. This enables them to release anxiety about incidents over which they have no control.
- Support your child with nutritious food and sleep.
- Work with the school support services and other available services.