



# Bereavement Policy

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Responsibility: Stephen Hoult-Allen, Executive Headteacher

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## 1. Aims

This bereavement policy aims to:

- Set out a guideline for how the school will respond to a death in our school community
- Set out a plan for communicating deaths in a timely manner that balances our school community's interests and transparency with the wishes of the family of the deceased
- Identify best practices for supporting pupils and/or members of staff experiencing bereavement
- Define the roles and responsibilities of key staff members and the governing board
- Provide a roadmap and framework for pupils or staff returning to school following bereavement

## 2. Roles and responsibilities

### 2.1. The Executive Head, Head of School and Designated Safeguarding Lead will

The Executive Head and Head of School have overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and for delegating any responsibilities under this policy to other members of staff. The Executive Head, Head of School and Designated Safeguarding Lead have responsibility for monitoring and supporting bereaved pupils and staff members (including before their bereavement, where relevant – for example, in the case of terminal illness). The Executive Head, Head of School and Designated Safeguarding Lead will:

#### 2.1.1. Support families

- Liaise with the family of the deceased or the family's appointed contact through the family's chosen method of communication

#### 2.1.2. Support pupils and staff

- Ensure that Children's Services are aware of the death of a pupil
- Where appropriate, communicate details of a death to pupils and staff as set out in this policy
- Arrange for monitoring and support of any individual staff members who are supporting bereaved pupils or staff
- Provide direct support to bereaved pupils and staff
- Source external bereavement support for pupils and staff
- Signpost to external support available to bereaved pupils and staff
- Organise safe spaces for bereaved members of the school community to take a time out
- Organise memorials, e.g. temporary tribute displays
- Arrange for the attendance and supervision of pupils at funerals (where permitted)
- Lead reintegration meetings for pupils or staff returning to school after a bereavement
- Maintain a calendar of dates and holidays that may be particularly difficult for bereaved pupils or staff and ensure they're supported on those days
- Provide additional support during significant transitions e.g. when moving up to the next phase at the school or transitioning to a new school

#### 2.1.3. Work with external agencies

- Participate in any multi-agency reviews as requested
- Seek advice from the Local Authority to respond to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death

### 2.2. Governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy, and supporting the Executive Head and Head of School. The governing board will:

- Undertake regular monitoring of how the school is supporting the bereaved, and the staff who support them, for example through a designated governor having regular catch-ups with the Executive Head and Head of School.
- Monitor the Executive Head's and Head and School's emotional wellbeing, for example through these catch-ups
- Assist the Executive Head and Head of School, where required, in responding to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death
- Where necessary, arrange for another staff member to take the lead if the Executive Head and Head of School are not available to respond to a death immediately

### 3. Provision for supporting staff who support the bereaved

Supporting pupils and staff who are grieving can be painful. Those staff members who carry out this essential work will be monitored and supported.

## 4. Immediate action following a death

### 4.1. Clarifying information and the wishes of the family

The Head of School or Executive Head will contact the family to:

- Clarify information
- Offer condolences
- Explain that staff, pupils and parents will need to be informed – clarify what message the family would like shared
- Explain when, how and who will next be in touch
- How news of a death will be confirmed if the family can't be immediately contacted?

### 4.2. Sharing the news with staff

- The Head of School and Executive Head will establish a script of the news to be shared
- A whole-school staff meeting will be called at the nearest available chance (beginning or end of the school day)
  - Do not feel afraid to show emotion – this just shows you are human, but it can come as a surprise if you were not expecting to react in this way.
  - Start by acknowledging that you have some sad news to give.
  - Be honest. Give the news stating simple facts, using the words 'dead/died'.
  - If known, and with the permission of the family, explain briefly where and when the death occurred. **The exact nature/cause of death should not be specified to avoid a risk of copying.**
  - If facts are not known, say so, and that you will endeavour to find out. If rumours are rife, say which of these are not correct, if known.
  - If appropriate, discuss the use of social media in response to the death.
  - Talk briefly about the person who died without eulogising them.
  - Mention any arrangements already in place.
  - Share the established script with staff to repeat as needed

- Consider whether some members of the school community should be told first. For example, those closest with the individual who has died or those with personal circumstances who may make this news more challenging to hear.

### 4.3. Sharing the news with pupils

The Head of School or Executive Head will:

- Create a visual (eg. PowerPoint with photographs and key wording) to support understanding
- The Head of School or Executive Head will appoint members of staff to go class by class to share the news, supported by the presentation:
  - Do not feel afraid to show emotion – this just shows you are human, but it can come as a surprise if you were not expecting to react in this way.
  - Start by acknowledging that you have some sad news to give.
  - Be honest. Give the news stating simple facts, using the words ‘dead/died’.
  - If known, and with the permission of the family, explain briefly where and when the death occurred. **The exact nature/cause of death should not be specified to avoid a risk of copying.**
  - If facts are not known, say so, and that you will endeavour to find out. If rumours are rife, say which of these are not correct, if known.

### 4.4. Informing parents/carers

The Head of School or Executive Head will compose a letter to parents and carers to:

- Inform that a member of the school community has died.
- Confirm what the pupils have been told in school and what support is available to them. **The exact nature/cause of death should not be specified to avoid a risk of copying.**
- Include some guidance information for parents/carers to talk to children and young people about death and to help when answering questions.

### 4.5. Responding to the media

In the event that a death that affects the school raises media interest, we will respond in the following manner:

- The Executive Head or Head of School will contact the Local Authority to confirm the manner in which information should be responded to.

## 5. Follow-up actions and support following a death

Cover the actions you’ll take and support you’ll offer both after a death that affects the whole school community (such as that of a pupil or staff member), and after a more personal bereavement (such as the death of a pupil’s close family member). You may also wish to cover actions and support in situations involving multiple fatalities (for example, an accident involving several pupils and/or staff members).

Wherever your procedures differ, make clear within each sub-section which scenarios you’re covering when.

### 5.1. Support for pupils and staff

Pupils and staff may require support to grieve in the initial days and weeks following a death.

- Those most impacted will be given time and space to reflect on the deceased individual either as a group or individually.
- The Head of School or Executive Head will coordinate which staff can be signposted as individuals for others to talk to if they wish.
- Support services will be signposted to.

## 5.2. Timetables

Timetables for the class/group closest to the deceased individual will be relaxed – maintained to keep a sense of order and routine but with the flexibility to stop lessons when needed or do alternate activities instead.

## 5.3. Tributes and condolences

- A room in the school will be dedicated to receiving tributes and condolences from pupils, staff and parents.
- These will be monitored by the Designated Safeguarding Lead for signs of concern being exhibited.
- These should be allowed to gather and displayed for around two weeks (with a natural end point being an end of a school week, holiday etc.)
- Tributes and condolences will be gathered and offered to the family if they would like to receive them.
  - If the family decline, these will be stored by the school for a further 3 months should the family change their decision.
- A permanent tribute, such as a plaque will be displayed in an area of the school grounds where pupils and staff may like to gather.

## 5.4. Funeral and/or Memorial services

The Head of School or Executive Head will consult the family as appropriate, to confirm:

- Whether members of staff, parents and/or pupils are welcome to attend the funeral or memorial service
- How condolences should be made and how staff and pupils can contribute

If staff are welcome to attend the funeral and wish to do so:

Explain:

- How staff should request leave to attend
- What considerations will be made in granting permission, e.g. availability of cover

If pupils are welcome to attend the funeral and wish to do so:

Explain:

- How pupils should request leave to attend
- What arrangements will be made for those who attend

## 6. Support for pupils returning to school after bereavement

Whether a pupil has been away from school following a personal bereavement or after a death affecting the whole school community, the school will support them in their return to school and for as long as necessary afterwards.

### 6.1. Reintegration meeting

The Head of School/ Executive Head with the child's teacher will meet with the bereaved pupil and their parents/carers to discuss how best to manage a return to school.

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- Determine whether the pupil is emotionally ready to return to the classroom either full-time or with adjustments to the timetable to allow for a phased return
- Address any concerns the pupil and their parents/carers have about the return to school
- Consult with the pupil about how or even if they want their classmates to know of the death (where relevant)
- Open lines of communication between the pupil and relevant staff to ensure support should the pupil feel overwhelmed
- Open lines of communication between the school and the pupil's parents/carers to coordinate support
- Consider any additional support needed for a pupil who is vulnerable or has special educational needs (SEN) or a disability

### 6.2. Ongoing support

- We will maintain regular contact with the pupil's parents/carers to monitor how the pupil is coping
- We acknowledge significant dates or holidays may be especially difficult and will work with the child's parents/carers to establish procedures around such calendar dates.
- We know that grief may impact a pupil's progress and affect their behaviour. To manage this, we will work with the parent/carer to keep them informed of their child's progress and steps to maintain engagement in school work.
- We will take care to manage changes for bereaved pupils by preparing them in advance (where possible) and taking extra steps to support necessary transitions

## 7. Support for staff returning to school after bereavement

Whether a staff member has been away from school following a personal bereavement or after a death affecting the whole school community, the school will support them in their return to school and for as long as necessary afterwards.

### 7.1. Reintegration meeting

The Head of School/ Executive Head will meet with the bereaved staff member to discuss how best to manage a return to school.

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- Determine whether the staff member is ready to return to work and the best way to make that return (e.g. a phased return to work or a temporary change in duties)
- Address any concerns the staff member may have about the return to school
- Consult with the staff member about how or even if they want their pupils and colleagues to know of the death (where relevant)
- Set guidelines for communication between the staff member and their line manager to monitor and support the staff member

## 7.2. Ongoing support

We acknowledge that grief can have an impact on a staff member's physical and mental health, which can then go on to impact their performance.

We also recognise that grieving is highly personal and that there can't be a one-size-fits-all solution for monitoring and supporting a bereaved person.

We will work with each individual to create a system of monitoring and support that works for that person. This may include:

Explain:

What internal and external sources of support will be available

What adjustments may be made, e.g. provisions for flexible working or reduced timetables

## 8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if required by the Executive Headteacher. At every review, it will be approved provided to governors for comment.

## 9. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our:

- Safeguarding and Child protection policy
- Behaviour for Learning policy
- Leave of absence policy
- Attendance policy



## Appendix: useful contacts

| ORGANISATION           | CONTACT DETAILS  |
|------------------------|--|
| Child Bereavement UK   | Helpline: 0800 02 888 40<br><a href="https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us">https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us</a>  |
| Winston's Wish         | Helpline: 08088 020 021<br><a href="https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/">https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/</a>   |
| Cruse Bereavement Care | Helpline: 0808 808 1677<br><a href="https://www.cruse.org.uk/about-cruse/contact-us">https://www.cruse.org.uk/about-cruse/contact-us</a>   |
| Mind                   | Infoline (information and signposting to further help): 0300 123 3393<br>Further contacts: <a href="https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/useful-contacts/">https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/useful-contacts/</a> |