



*With Love We Flourish*

## Bereavement Policy

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Policy Title:	Bereavement Policy	Date:	June 2023
Reviewed by:	Alyson Frost	Review date:	June 2026
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*'Let all that you do be done in love'*

1 Corinthians 16:14

*Nurturing individuals to be the best they can be in an inclusive environment where they feel valued, respected and know they belong.*

## Bereavement Policy

### Rationale

We understand that bereavement is faced by members of our school community at different times and that when the loss is of a member of our school community – such as a child, parent or staff member, it can be particularly difficult. Pupils need to be supported when they experience family bereavements and other significant losses in the course of their lives while they are at school. This policy will provide guidelines to be followed after bereavement.

The aim is to be supportive to both pupils and adults, and for staff to have greater confidence and be better equipped to cope when bereavement happens. Every death and the circumstances in which it occurs is different and this policy has been constructed to guide us on how to deal professionally, sensitively and compassionately with difficult matters in upsetting circumstances. Our school is committed to the emotional health and well-being of our staff and pupils. We are dedicated to the continual development of a 'healthy school'. We wish to work towards this in all aspects of school life, and to provide an ethos, environment and curriculum that support and prepare pupils for coping with separation or loss of a loved one, either through death or divorce.

### Following a Bereavement:

Children and adults alike have the right to:

- Be given space and time to grieve in ways which are appropriate to each individual
- Be given support from whichever source is deemed the most appropriate – if possible, of their own choice.
- A caring environment in which they feel safe to demonstrate grief without fear of judgement.

We recognise that:

- Grief may not always be apparent to the onlooker, but its invisibility makes it no less real.
- Differing religions/cultures view death and bereavement from different perspectives and all viewpoints should be taken into consideration and given equal value in the school environment.
- The death of a child has huge repercussions beyond the immediate teaching/care team of that child and every effort should be taken to inform and deal sensitively with the far reaching contacts.

### The Management of Bereavement in School

A universally accepted procedure outline will, in itself, not enable everyone to feel comfortable in dealing with the practicalities of death and bereavement. Each bereavement is unique and comes with its own specific challenges; however, it is helpful to have a framework on which to build. One of our main concerns must be the immediate family of the deceased and as a school we state our commitment to any such family as may need practical, emotional and ongoing support.

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### Transition

It is vitally important to ensure that if a child has experienced bereavement that this information is passed on to the relevant persons when they move on to a new class or school.

### Death of a pupil

The school may be notified in a number of ways. Upon notification of the death of a pupil:

- The caller will be put through to the most senior member of staff on site.
- Where death occurs in the holidays or at weekends the caller will contact whoever they can – they may have the phone number of a member of staff they know at home, for example.
- In that instance the member of staff who takes the call will immediately contact the most senior member of the school team possible and that person will then assume responsibility for the dissemination of the information.
- It may not be a parent who informs the school about a death. Any member of staff finding out about the death of a pupil should contact the most senior member of the school team as soon as possible.
- The same course of action should be taken if a member of the school staff finds out about a pupil death during the school holidays.

### Sharing information

It is important to agree, with the parent, before the school can take on the role of informing concerned parties within, or outside, the school community. Evidence suggest that parents are often happy to have this burden taken away from them, as they have many people unconnected with the school to contact, although this must not be assumed.

There can be no definitive list of people to contact and, therefore, it will be different for each child. The school should ensure that all people who are close to the child are told in a sensitive and supportive manner rather than risk them hearing it 'on the grapevine'. The school needs to ensure it does not add to the sorrow by leaving people feeling marginalised.

In our school, the following people should be considered:

- Current school staff, including those not in school that day
- Previous school staff who worked closely with the child
- Chair of Governors
- Club staff – BC, ASC, football, music teacher etc.
- Bus driver if they use the bus
- Other parents – if children have been informed, the school needs to send a note to parents informing them of the loss, and they may need to support or comfort their children. See Appendix C.

In some circumstances:

- SEN team
- Medical team – the school nurse for example
- Respite centres if applicable
- Other professionals who work with the child
- Social Work team( if applicable)

Some parents may need to be telephoned if their relationship is closer but who may not have been informed by the family. The process for telling the other pupils will be decided by the Headteacher following consultation with parents (in the case of a deceased child) and teaching staff. For example, with different aged pupils there will be different decisions made and the class teacher of the class with the loss will usually be the best person to tell the rest of the children in that class. It is important that staff avoid adding worry – for example, if the child died in hospital we do not want to give children a fear of hospitals.

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Although the finality of death cannot be diminished, if there are mitigating circumstances that may help – such as that the child was in pain and now is free of pain – this can be used to help alleviate sorrow. Children must be told that, while they may feel sad, they do not have to feel guilty if they go on to have fun and pleasure in their day ahead. They must not feel obliged to assume a burden of grief. Children must be allowed to ask questions at this time or at any point in the following days or weeks. Staff must answer honestly and to the best of their knowledge. See Appendix D

### **The funeral**

- It is essential to sound out the family's wishes. The family may welcome involvement of members of the school community but equally, may wish to keep things private.
- The Headteacher and/or the SLT will make arrangements for the school to be represented at the funeral, and identify which staff and pupils may want to attend, together with the practicalities of issues such as staff cover and transport. For some schools it is appropriate to close, for others it is not, consequently difficult decisions will sometimes have to be made concerning attendance.
- Will flowers be sent and/or a collection made? Involve staff and pupils in the decision.
- Cultural and religious implications need consideration.
- If the parents wish to visit the school at any time after the funeral (with the death of a child), this will be agreed.

### **Memory Assemblies**

It may be appropriate to hold a memory assembly for the child. Staff need to be able to show pupils that it is perfectly normal to feel upset at the loss of a friend and that helpful rituals, prayers, and remembering can be shared in a manageable way together.

### **Responding to the media**

Some deaths, particularly those in sudden or traumatic circumstances, attract media attention. All members of staff are advised not to respond to journalists and to refer all enquiries to the Headteacher, who will make a considered response after seeking assistance from the Local Authority.

### **On-Going Support**

#### **For staff:**

Following bereavement, it is only to be expected that some members of staff will be emotionally affected and would benefit from the provision of some time for reflection. The following support may be helpful:

- A specific room could be allocated– eg. The Hub or staff room – for the duration of a lunchtime to enable staff to meet and share their thoughts over a coffee or tea. It should be emphasised that anything shared on such occasions should be held as confidential and not for public airing.
- See-Saw offer counselling support and staff will be reminded about this service.
- Availability of information about accessing bereavement support outside of school, e.g.: CRUSE

#### **For Pupils:**

- In most cases, each child will have a favoured member of staff to approach.
- The Headteacher will ensure that we have suitable books and other materials to help children discuss death and come to terms with loss.
- A Teaching Assistant may be allocated to the class to observe children's responses and to provide further emotional support.
- For children who are particularly affected, a specific area may allocated over lunchtimes where they can be supported
- Social Stories may be one way to help pupils to understand loss.
- Outside agencies such as See-Saw or Educational Psychologists can offer support to pupils who may need more help.

#### **For The Family:**

- Communicate with the family straight away and offer support. Send a letter of condolence from the school.

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- Give parents and family the opportunity to collect any personal belongings of the person who has died.
- Send a representative to the funeral.
- Hold a collection /flowers to be sent as appropriate.
- Invite parents/family to any commemorative events held by the school, both at the time and in subsequent years.
- If memorial work has been completed, for example a remembrance wall or book, then this should be returned to the parents at an appropriate time, and pupils informed where it has gone.
- If the parents wish to visit the school at any time after the funeral, this will be agreed. Parents will be told that they are welcome in the school and will be encouraged to come and visit. The first visit to the school is often difficult and will be arranged sensitively in accordance with the parents' wishes. It will then be for the parents to decide if they wish to maintain on going links. Each family will be different, with differing needs. Therefore, the school will always be there to act as a source of support and information.

### **The Death of a Member of Staff**

All of the principles and procedures listed above apply to the death of a staff member. For a letter template see Appendix C. In addition to the above, the school will notify the LA as employer. Where appropriate to the wishes of the staff member's family, the Headteacher will seek permission from the Chair of Governors to close the school so that all members of staff are able to attend the funeral.

### **Responsibilities**

The designated person within the school who has overall responsibility for support and liaison in event of a death or traumatic loss is the Headteacher. In the event that this person is absent then another Senior Leader will take responsibility. The responsibilities are:

- Policy development and review, involving pupils, staff, governors, parents/carers and relevant local agencies.
- Implementing the policy and reflecting on its effectiveness in practice.
- Using the expertise within the school and sharing the responsibilities.
- Establishing and co-ordinating links with external agencies.
- Cross-phase liaison with other primary or secondary school.
- Accessing and co-ordinating training and support for staff.

The nominated Governor with responsibility for bereavement is the Chair of Governors. The responsibilities are:

- To contribute to generating and updating the policy.
- To support the Head Teacher in overseeing the way in which bereavement is managed.
- To support the Head Teacher in overseeing the way in which bereavement is tackled in the curriculum.
- To review practice.

### **Appendices**

Appendix A: List of Online Resources and Information

Appendix B: Books on Bereavement

Appendix C: Template letters (informing parents of the death of a pupil; death of a member of staff)

Appendix D: School Procedures (including actions to be taken in the first 30 minutes of news being received, assembly script, end of the school day processes for staff)

Appendix E: Supporting pupils

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## Appendix A – List of Online Resources and Information

- [www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk) A useful website offering practical ideas for helping those bereaved in the family and school community.
- [www.keech.org.uk](http://www.keech.org.uk) The website of Keech Hospice Care, our local Children’s Hospice. Gives details of its facilities and the support it offers. [www.chums.info](http://www.chums.info) A bereavement support service for children who have suffered a loss
- [www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk) A bereavement support service for children who have suffered a loss
- [www.juliesplace.com](http://www.juliesplace.com) A support resource for bereaved siblings
- [www.bhf.org.uk/smallcreature](http://www.bhf.org.uk/smallcreature) British Heart Foundation site to help children come to terms with loss using cartoon creatures. An animated film and we have a printed pack to go with it.
- [www.bbc.co.uk/.../bereavement/bereavement\\_helpchildren.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/.../bereavement/bereavement_helpchildren.shtml) Information on the way bereavement affects children
- <http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk> An organisation offering local bereavement support to both adults and children
- <http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/index.htm> Federation of organisations
- [www.seesaw.org.uk](http://www.seesaw.org.uk) 2 Merewood Ave, Oxford OX3 8EF Phone: 01865 744768