



Bereavement Policy

Status	Non - Statutory	Date created	November 2011
Any other statutory names for this policy (where applicable)	Bereavement Policy	Date first approved	21 November 2011
Responsibility for this policy (job title)	Deputy Headteacher	Date last reviewed	Autumn 2023
Governors' Committee with responsibility for its review	Teaching and Learning	Frequency of review	Three Years
Tick here if Bucks Policy attached in its entirety		To be put on the school website? (Yes/No)	Yes
Approval necessary	Sub Committee		

The following has been drawn up with close reference to strategy guidance from the charity Winston's Wish.

When any member of the school community dies, or any person closely related to a member of the school community, accurate information will be gathered by a member of the Leadership Team, if possible from the member of staff or student's family or a representative.

1. Aim

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

The following guidelines will provide assistance in how to manage the situation but circumstances and the age of the students involved will dictate precise details and actions. The Headteacher will determine the member of staff taking the lead in each event and they will then determine exactly the procedure to be followed.

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1 The Headteacher

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and for delegating any responsibilities under this policy to other members of staff.

The Headteacher will:

- Liaise with the family of the deceased, permission will be gained from the family and agreement about what details should be shared and with whom.
- Appoint a member of the Leadership Team to coordinate the actions to be taken and refer to this policy in making decisions.
- Where appropriate, communicate details of a death to pupils and staff as set out in this policy, or activate communication teams:
 - If the death occurs during the holidays, staff will be telephoned/sent messages by members of the Leadership Team as appropriate and a meeting will be held at the start of the term.
 - The Head or another member of the Leadership Team will pass on details as appropriate of what happened up to the death and give a factual explanation of how the death occurred.
 - Questions will be taken and arrangements will be made to cover lessons of staff who are unable to return to supervising classes.
 - Consideration will be given to contacting members of staff who are on maternity leave or who have left;-arrangements will be made to inform them over the telephone if a personal visit is impractical. The relationship between the absent colleague and the deceased will be considered when deciding how this is done.
- Where appropriate and where known, contact will be made with other schools who may be affected by the death to ensure that similar arrangements are being followed.
- Respond to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death
- Participate in any multi-agency reviews as requested
- Lead reintegration meetings for pupils or staff returning to school after a bereavement
- Arrange for monitoring and support of the pastoral support team or any individual staff members who are supporting bereaved pupils or staff

2.2 Pastoral support staff

The pastoral support team has 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 pastoral support team will:

- Provide direct support to bereaved 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 tributes, books of condolences, memorial web pages
- Arrange for the attendance and supervision of pupils at funerals (where permitted)

- 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 year group or transitioning to a new school

2.3 Governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy, and supporting the Headteacher. They will:

- Undertake regular monitoring of how the school is supporting the bereaved, and the staff who support them, through the Co-Chairs of Governors, who will, as needed, have regular catch-ups with the Headteacher or pastoral team
- Monitor the Headteacher's emotional wellbeing, through the Co-Chairs of Governors, who will, as needed, have regular catch-ups with the Headteacher
- Assist the Headteacher, 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 Headteacher is not available to respond to a death immediately

3. Provision for supporting staff who support the bereaved

- Details will be provided of someone who can be available to talk things through with a member of staff if they are finding the situation particularly hard (the Wellbeing Lead, if available, or the Deputy Headteacher) - a room will be assigned for this purpose by the Cover Officer.
- A nominated member of staff, usually the Headteacher, will prepare a letter to parents and carers (to be given after school).
- Consideration will be given to all staff who might be particularly vulnerable and arrangements made for colleagues to contact them by phone, if, for example, they are likely to be alone that evening.
- A collaborative message of condolence will be discussed and agreed. The Headteacher will send a letter of condolence, asking the family whether they would appreciate attendance at the funeral by any members of staff.
- If staff do go to the funeral, they should be encouraged to go with another colleague, rather than alone.

4. Clarifying information and the wishes of the family

- The Headteacher, or in their absence, the Deputy Headteacher will be responsible for contacting the family to confirm news of a death and determine the wishes of the family in terms of what can be shared with the rest of the school community and how the Headteacher, or in their absence, the Deputy Headteacher will liaise with the relevant authorities to confirm the death if the family can't be immediately contacted.
- The Headteacher, or in their absence, the Deputy Headteacher will manage, with guidance from the Governing Board, what will be communicated to the school community if news of a death is spreading via social media before confirmation can be made.

5. For a death that may attract media coverage

- Identify a nominated spokesperson (e.g. Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Chair of Governors) to provide a 'news statement' at an agreed time, as a way of dealing with media intrusion.

- The individual's family will be contacted by the nominated person before any statement is made and police or legal advice will be sought as appropriate.
- A 'protected' telephone line will be identified to ensure free flow of accurate information to and from the school/hospital if this is appropriate.
- With death in traumatic circumstances such as suicide or murder, bereavement support services may be requested as well as the School Counsellor (e.g. Winston's Wish, Cruse, Compassionate Friends, the Educational Psychology Service and Papyrus in the case of death by suicide).
- Alert Reception Staff and, if necessary, the whole school community, to the possibility of media attention and who the nominated spokesperson is.

6. Informing Students

As soon as possible:

- A member of the Leadership Team will coordinate the actions to be taken.
- Those students who had a long-term and/or close relationship with the deceased will be identified and told together as a separate group.
- If the death occurs during the holidays, parents of such students will be telephoned by members of the Leadership Team as appropriate and, if possible, support in school will be arranged and offered to them.
- If the death was from an illness suffered by some students at the school, the School Nurse Team and/or Matron will be contacted in order to speak to these students and reassure them (e.g. asthma, diabetes etc).
- Where possible, students will be told in small groups - ideally in tutor groups.
- All students will be informed.
- Staff informing students will be given guidelines/support on how to do this.
- Time will be allowed for them to ask questions and, if they wish, to share their own experiences of death.
- The students' questions will be answered factually and euphemisms like 'passed away' or 'lost' will be avoided.
- Discussion will be ended on a positive note - e.g. not all people who are ill or have accidents die - many get better.

After the students have been told:

- A member of staff who can be available to the students throughout the day will be identified and students informed about how to find them.
- A letter will be sent to parents via ParentMail at the end of the day. This will include details of the steps you've taken during the day to inform pupils of the death, what additional support has been made available and where to go for more help and information
- Arrangements will be considered for those who might wish to attend the funeral - the letter home will suggest that parents go with their child.
- Students' Form Tutors and Heads of Year will be alert to signs in later days that any student is struggling and will liaise with the student and her parents about additional support.

7 If a student's parent or sibling dies

7.1 Immediate action:

- The wishes of the student's family will be sought where possible and permission gained to share the news with other students and staff as appropriate - it may be appropriate to arrange a designated family friend as a contact point.

- If news leaks out before this permission is gained, other students may need to be told in order to prevent rumours circulating.
- Staff will be informed at a briefing if appropriate, or via gmail to those who teach the student and/or the class.
- The Data Manager will amend information on SIMs and ensure that Schoolcomms/ParentMail is updated as quickly as possible.
- The guidelines above will be followed for informing students but usually, only the student's immediate tutor group (and G group if applicable) will be informed.
- If a letter to all students' parents is not appropriate, consideration should be given as to whether to contact the parents of particularly upset students, either to arrange for them to go home, or so that they can be prepared for their child's return from school and make time to talk to them.
- The teacher responsible for informing the class should then find out whether there are other close friends in other classes who might need to be informed and should seek to gather these students together soon after the initial group of students has been told.

7.2 In preparation for the student's return to school:

- The Head of Year or a member of the Leadership Team will make contact with the family.
- This member of staff can visit the student at the family home if this is desired, to discuss how best to manage their return to school - if this is not appropriate, the student and a parent will be invited into school before the start of the school day to meet with the member of staff.
- The student will be asked to nominate one or two members of school staff they would feel comfortable to go to whilst at school if they feel the need.
- Consideration will be given to a 'time out card' to enable the student to go to a nominated member of the school staff if they feel the need during the day for the next few weeks.
- Discussion about how the student wishes to be treated by other students will take place and this advice will be relayed to the class - e.g. whether the student would welcome questions from close friends or whether she wants to continue without talking about the death in school at the moment.
- Consideration will be given to whether the student wishes to have some private time with close friends outside lessons before rejoining the rest of the class.
- If members of the school staff are to attend the funeral, they should be encouraged to do so with a colleague, rather than alone in order to provide support for each other, as well as for other students who may be attending.

8. After the student's return to school:

8.1 Reintegration Meeting

The Deputy Head with responsibility for Pastoral Care 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

Ongoing Support

- The student's name will be added to the 'Compassion Register', with key information to be shared with current and future teachers to be drawn up in consultation with the student and their parents. This will be shared with staff and updated as required.
- We will maintain regular contact with the pupil's parents/carers to monitor how the pupil is coping
- Consideration will be given to the students' timetables
- Consideration will be given to how the school community will come together to memorialise the deceased
- What forms of physical memorial will be permitted (e.g. a book of condolences or a temporary tribute) and where these will be located
- Any religious/cultural considerations will be taken into account as appropriate

9. Funerals

We will consult the family as appropriate, to confirm:

- Whether members of staff 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, the School will ensure all staff are aware of how to request leave to attend and 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, the School will ensure all pupils are aware of how to request leave to attend and what arrangements will be made for those who attend

10. Bereavement in the Curriculum

A unit on Grief and Bereavement forms part of the Year 9 Learning for Life programme of study.

11. 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.

11.1 Reintegration meeting

The Headteacher 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

11.2 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:

Appendix: useful contacts

organisation	contact details
Child Bereavement UK	Helpline: 0800 02 888 40 https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us
Winston’s Wish	Helpline: 08088 020 021 https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/
Cruse Bereavement Care	Helpline: 0808 808 1677 https://www.cruse.org.uk/about-cruse/contact-us
Mind	Infoline (information and signposting to further help): 0300 123 3393 Further contacts: https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/useful-contacts/
Papyrus	https://www.papyrus-uk.org/ Specifically on suicide bereavement support: https://www.papyrus-uk.org/suicide-bereavement-support/