



Bereavement Policy

Approved by:	Ash Grove Primary Academy Governing Body	Date: May 2021
Last reviewed on:	May 2021	
Next review due by:	May 2023	

Head teacher: Miss V Williams		Date:	12.05.2021
Chair of Governing Body: Mr Nigel Stockton		Date:	12.05.2021

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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 head teacher

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
- › Where appropriate, communicate details of a death to pupils and staff as set out in this policy, or activate communication teams
- › 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 Senior Leadership Team, including the Learning Mentor

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.

The governing board will:

- › Undertake regular monitoring of how the school is supporting the bereaved, and the staff who support them, this would become a standard item on the Governing Body Agendas
- › Monitor the headteacher's emotional wellbeing, This would be the responsibility of the Chair of Governors through weekly meetings (phone call or face to face)
- › 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.

If the death is the head teacher the chair of governors will liaise with the Senior Leadership Team in contacting their family and in notifying members of staff in school as well as informing all parent/carers. The chair of governors will work closely with the deputy head teacher and will monitor their wellbeing.

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.

Staff will be supported and directed to resources by the Senior Leadership Team. In an event of a death the Educational Psychologist will also be consulted. All staff have had basic mental health and wellbeing training and resources are easily accessible in the staffroom and on the school website. The Senior Leadership Team will monitor staff's wellbeing throughout.

4. Immediate actions following a death

4.1 Clarifying information and the wishes of the family

- › The head teacher 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
- › If the family cannot be contacted the Head Teacher will contact named persons on the families integris contact details. No action will be taken until a member of the family confirms the death
- › The head teacher will liaise with the family to what, how and when the death will be communicated to the school community. Communications will clarify what support will be placed in school and how pupils will be told. (see appendix for model letters)

4.2 Sharing the news with staff

- › The head teacher will be responsible for sharing the news with staff and explaining what support will be available to those who need it
- › Staff will be informed promptly through a staff meeting. The staff What's App group will be used for organising time and a place. If the school is closed the head teacher will set up a virtual meeting.

4.3 Sharing the news with pupils

- › The head teacher will be responsible for sharing the news with pupils and explaining what support will be available to those who need it
- › The head teacher will inform pupils class by class. This will not be done until after parents have been contacted. Parents will also be signposted on what to do if their child does become distressed. How

children will be informed will depend on their age and if they knew the child/member of staff. We recognise some classes may need more support than others and follow up work will be required.

4.4 Informing parents/carers

- › Parents/carers will be notified of a death by communication of a letter, which will be posted on Class Dojo (the school communication app) Please see appendix for templates.

4.5 Responding to specific causes of death

Some deaths need to be handled more sensitively due to their potential to cause fear, anger or imitation.

- › If the death is the result of suicide the school will use resources from Samaritans which provides a [step-by-step programme](#) to support school.
- › If the death is due to homicide or family violence the school will use resources from Child Bereavement UK. The link can be found at the end of this policy.
- › If the death is due to contagious disease, we will follow procedures as determined by our local health protection team

4.6 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 head teacher is responsible for responding to requests from the media. Other members of staff will be told not to communicate with the media but to direct any questions to the head teacher. The head teacher will also liaise with the Local Authority/Trust CEO.

5. Follow-up actions and support following a death

5.1 Support for pupils and staff

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

The Learning Mentor and Senior Leadership Team will be available to lead any support within school for staff and Pupils. The above people will also be able to signpost staff, pupils and families to other resources and materials as and when needed.

5.2 Timetables

Depending on the nature and circumstances of the death school may need to fully or partially close school. Should this happen parents and carers will be informed as soon as it is possible to do so. The school also recognises that some children or members of staff may need time and additional support. Partial timetables/phased returns could be an option to be considered.

5.3 Tributes and condolences

In the event of a death the school will come together in order to remember the deceased. A condolence book will be available in the staffroom. Parents may wish to pass on messages for the book through private message on Class Dojo to the Inclusion Officer. A tribute may also be set up by the front gates to allow families to show their respects. The head teacher will liaise with families on where this will be.

5.4 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/pupils are welcome to attend the funeral.

Any member of staff wishing to attend the funeral must inform the head teacher. Any child/family wishing to attend the funeral must let the school office know.

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 Learning Mentor 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, we ask that parents and carers inform the child's class teacher.
- › We know that grief may impact a pupil's progress and affect their behaviour. To manage this, we will ensure that a case study is completed and that the child has access to additional support through working with the Learning Mentor or accessing additional outside agency 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 teacher 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:

Signposting the member of staff to an outside agency- SAS

Making adjustments at work through flexible working and reduced timetables

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed following a bereavement or every 2 years.

At every review, it will be approved by the full Governing Body

9. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our:

- › Child protection policy
- › Critical incident policy
- › Behaviour policy
- › Mental Health and Wellbeing policy

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/
School Website	https://ashgroveprimaryacademy.co.uk

Example letter informing parents of a staff member's unexpected death

School letter head

Date

Dear Parent/Carer,

It is with deep sadness that I write to tell you that our much-loved teacher [insert name] passed away on [insert date] [insert name] was [insert nature of death e.g taken seriously ill recently and sadly did not recover]. [She/He] has been a teacher at [name of school] for [...] years and during this time has been a wonderful teacher, a great friend and a much-loved and respected part of our team. We are all going to miss [him/her] dearly.

Please be aware that the school has not told the children of [insert name] passing today; I am writing to inform you so that you are now able to explain and talk to the children about this. Our aim is to inform you now, so that you can decide how best to support them with this news. We would advise that, if appropriate, you talk to your children about this and provide them with simple, factual information.

All children react differently to sad news, it is important to give your children time to ask questions and that you try to answer them as honestly as you can and allow them to express their feelings. Tomorrow all children will have the opportunity to talk through with their teacher, senior leaders, TAs, or any adults which they are close to.

Children in Year [...] who knew [him/her] the most, will spend more time in class remembering [insert name] and celebrating their life. If you feel you would like further advice or guidance on how to support your child with this news, then please contact the Learning Mentor.

We are a very strong school community and I am sure that everyone will be supportive of each other. Our thoughts are with [insert name's] family at this difficult time. We will make available a condolence book, which will be in the staff room for anyone who would like to write in it before and after drop-off and collection times throughout next week. This is something that, in time we will pass on to the family.

Please do not hesitate to let me know if there is anything further you feel we can do to help.

Best wishes,

Headteacher

Example letter informing parents of a pupil's unexpected death

School letter head

Date Dear Parent/Carer,

It is with huge sadness that I write to inform you of the death of one of our Year [...] pupils, [insert name] [insert name] was [insert nature of death e.g unexpectedly taken seriously ill recently and sadly did not recover, involved in a tragic accident and sadly did not recover]. Our hearts go out to [insert name's] family and friends and I have sent condolences on behalf of us all here.

[Insert name of school] is a school founded on family and togetherness, and it is always our aim to support our children and our staff to the best of our ability. Therefore I have already been in contact with a range of bereavement support professionals so that we can draw upon their support to help us all, children and adults alike, to find a way through this difficult time.

Please be aware that the school has not told the children of [insert name] passing today, but are providing you with the opportunity to convey this yourself. We will then talk to the children tomorrow, class by class, as appropriate to their age and the capacity in which they knew [insert name]. We realise that many of our pupils, especially those in [insert year groups] may not have known [insert name] and therefore we will not routinely discuss [him/her] with the younger classes in particular. However we will monitor all children closely and provide relevant support.

Over the days and weeks ahead we will continue to provide bereavement support and I will keep you informed as to the nature of this; we are also able to provide you with further information regarding support services should you require further involvement. In addition, as a school we will begin to think of how we can honour [insert name's] memory and celebrate [his/her life], and once again will keep you informed as they emerge. Please do not hesitate to let me know if there is anything further you feel we can do to help.

Best wishes,

Headteacher

Example letter informing parents of a pupil's death following long term illness

School letter head

Date

Dear Parent/Carer, It is with huge sadness that I write to inform you of the death of one of our Year [...] pupils, [insert name] As many of you will be aware [insert name] had been battling with a [insert brief summary of illness e.g rare form of cancer] for a considerable time and as a school we have worked hard to support both [insert name] and [his/her] family.

[Insert name of school] is a school founded on family and togetherness, and it is always our aim to support our children and our staff to the best of our ability. Therefore, I have already been in contact with a range of bereavement support professionals so that we can draw upon their support to help us all, children and adults alike, to find a way through this difficult time.

Please be aware that the school has not told the children of [insert name] passing today, but are providing you with the opportunity to convey this yourself. We will then talk to the children tomorrow, class by class, as appropriate to their age and the capacity in which they knew [insert name]. We realise that many of our pupils, especially those in [insert year groups] may not have known [insert name] and therefore we will not routinely discuss [him/her] with the younger classes in particular. However, we will monitor all children closely and provide relevant support.

Over the days and weeks ahead we will continue to provide bereavement support and I will keep you informed as to the nature of this; we are also able to provide you with further information regarding support services should you require further involvement. In addition, as a school we will begin to think of how we can honour [insert name's] memory and celebrate [his/her life], and once again will keep you informed as they emerge.

Please do not hesitate to let me know if there is anything further you feel we can do to help.

Best wishes,

Headteacher