

Bereavement policy

The Federation of Broughton and West Tytherley Primary Schools



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1. Aims

This bereavement policy aims to:

- Set out a guideline for how our 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

There will be a number of members of staff involved in the support. This may include the following:

- The Headteacher
- The class teacher
- Designated safeguarding lead
- SENCO
- Religious leaders if your school has a religious foundation

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
- 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 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, such as 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 – for example, 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 – for example, through regular catch-ups with the headteacher or pastoral team.
- Monitor the headteacher's emotional wellbeing – for example, through regular meetings between the headteacher and chair.
- 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

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

This may include the following:

- Specialised training
- Contact with organisations that specialize in providing support with bereavement
- Regular check ins from SLT and the Mental health lead as well as other staff

4. Immediate actions following a death

A death that affects the whole school community (such as that of a pupil or staff member):

The Headteacher would undertake the following:

- Verify the facts and ascertain the details that were to be shared
- Ensure that the authorities and school leaders were informed
- Coordinate staff communication
- Coordinate community communication
- Identify and allocate appropriate support.

A death that affects a pupil or member of staff – such as a close family member

The Headteacher would undertake the following:

- Verify the facts and ascertain the details that were to be shared
- Ensure that the authorities and school leaders were informed (as appropriate)
- Coordinate staff communication
- Identify and allocate appropriate support.

Situations involving multiple fatalities (for example, an accident involving several pupils and/or staff members).

The Headteacher would undertake the following:

- Liaison was established with the police/ emergency services
- Verify the facts and ascertain the details that were to be shared
- Ensure that the authorities and school leaders were informed
- Coordinate staff communication
- Coordinate community communication
- Ensure that any communications with the media were managed
- Identify and allocate appropriate support

4.1 Clarifying information and the wishes of the family

- The Headteacher or the member of the staff with the most appropriate relationship will make contact with 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 immediately be contacted, the Headteacher will liaise with police, as to the situation and how contact can be made.
- if news of a death is spreading via social media before confirmation can be made, the Headteacher will take advice from the police, the governing body, and the County Council.

4.2 Sharing the news with staff

Where possible, the Headteacher will be responsible for sharing the news with staff and explaining what support will be available to those who need it. This would if possible be through a meeting, or a phone call system.

4.3 Sharing the news with pupils

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- Depending on the situation, careful thought will be given to allocating the most appropriate member of staff to be responsible for sharing the news with pupils and explaining what support will be available to those who need it.
- Where possible, children will be told at the same time, but in smaller groups in order to share the correct information in a supportive manner.

4.4 Informing parents/carers

- Parents/carers will be notified of a death by sending an e-mail or a letter home with pupils explaining the steps taken during the day to inform pupils of the death and what additional support has been made available and where to go for more help and information.

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 (Samaritans provides a [step-by-step programme](#) to support schools).
- The death is due to homicide or family violence (Child Bereavement UK has a guide to 'Supporting children and young people bereaved by murder or manslaughter').
- 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 Headteacher and Chair of Governors, with the advice of Hampshire County Council will liaise with media. Staff members will be requested not to respond to media requests, and should instead refer enquiries to the Headteacher.

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.

- Support will be made available in school, e.g. pastoral care team, bereavement team, peer-to-peer support.
- Pupils and staff will be directed to sources of external support, e.g. community mental health resources and bereavement charities.

5.2 Timetables

Timetable adaptations may be made for some or even all pupils, depending on the circumstances.

5.3 Tributes and condolences

Depending on the situation, it may be appropriate to organise tributes and condolences. If needed, this would be organised by the Headteacher in discussion with the Chair of Governors and the relevant staff, in accordance with the wishes of the bereaved party.

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

- Staff should request leave to attend by filling in a request for absence form. Consideration will be given to this with relation to availability of cover.

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

- Families of pupils and pupils should request leave to attend by filling in a request for absence

6. Support for pupils returning to school after bereavement

When 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

An appropriate person will be delegated to 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 pupils will be supported during these times.

We know that grief may impact a pupil's progress and affect their behaviour. To manage this, we will ensure that support is available and the impact of this monitored. We will use outside agencies for additional support and ensure that communication with all parties remains clear and open.

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

When 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

An appropriate person will be delegated to 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.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher. At every review, it will be approved by the FGB.

9. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our:

- Child protection policy
- Critical incident policy
- Behaviour 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/